

Standing in the Ancient Faith

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 May 2025

Preacher: Martin Shadwick

[0 : 0 0] We'll now be reading the passage that we just sung, Hebrews chapter 11, and we'll be reading the passage.

And without faith, it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists, and he rewards those who seek him. By faith, Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.

By this, he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. 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, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

[2 : 0 7] 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. 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.

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

He considered that God 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.

[3 : 2 2] 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.

And that's where we'll be leaving the passage today. Good morning, everyone. My name's Martin.

For any of you who are new here, it's lovely to have you here. And I hope you are able to join with church for lunch after this service.

We're going to be looking at Hebrews chapter 11, the passage that was read for us. So it would be really great if you could have your Bibles open there at Hebrews chapter 11. I'm getting my notes sorted out here.

Trying to... Oh, here we go. Sorry. Computer is not responding. I've taken some advice from Alan Lucas.

[4 : 24] And I now own a pair of multifocal glasses. So that... Purely for this purpose, for preaching. So that I can preach without having to take them on and off constantly.

So this is the first sermon I'm giving with multifocal glasses. So if it doesn't work, Alan, I blame you. But, yeah, if it does work, then, well, that's to his credit.

Okay, so Hebrews chapter 11. And there's an outline you can follow along if you'd like to. Let me pray again as we come to God's word. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the scriptures, that you speak to us in them, for our faith, for our edification, for our encouragement, for our hope.

So please speak to us again this morning. And grow us in faith. And grant us perseverance. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, Christians stand in an ancient tradition of faith. We are people who say, we believe. We affirm it in creeds.

[5 : 34] Maybe not a race evangelical, but in lots of churches. We believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. We believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

We believe in the Holy Spirit. I'm not saying we don't believe those things at grace. We don't often say creeds out loud. But creeds have been said at churches for centuries, since the early church.

We affirm that we believe, we declare it in songs. I will not boast in anything, no gifts, no power, no wisdom, but I will boast in Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection.

We express faith in prayers. Your kingdom come, your will be done. We are people who believe. To be a Christian is to be a believer. There's an overall trend in Western society of rising unbelief.

And you can track that in census data. There are fewer and fewer people who nominate that they're Christians on the Australian census.

[6 : 39] There are more who nominate that they have no religion. But there are also many who buck that trend, who buck the trend of rising unbelief. As people find secularism to be shallow and empty and unsatisfying.

As people find atheism to be unable to answer the most important questions of life. So, for example, in the UK, in the last six years, so between 2019 and 2025 in the UK, the percentage of 18 to 24 year olds who say they believe in God has more than doubled.

Six years. 2019, it was 22%. 2025, 45% of 18 to 24 year olds say they believe in God. In about that same period, so between 2018 and 2024, the percentage of 18 to 24 year olds who attend church at least once a month in the UK has risen from 4% to 16%.

It's quadrupled. Isn't that extraordinary? Young people who are coming back to church and back to faith in God. I mean, praise the Lord.

In Australia, while the overall number of Christians has declined, there are also people moving in the other direction. Do you know that I was reading an article this week that nearly 785,000 Australians who ticked no religion in the 2016 census identified as Christian in the 2021 census.

[8 : 18] 785,000 people. Who have realised, now whether they're all practising Christians and I don't know, but they've realised there's something empty in no religion.

They don't want to be that. And that includes a large number of people in Australia, over 55. In that age bracket. See, there may be rising unbelief.

But there are also trend buckers. And God gave us the book of Hebrews in the Bible to encourage us to be trend buckers.

To be those who stand up and say, we believe. We believe. Look at chapter 10, verse 39. Just before the chapter that we're focusing on this morning.

Chapter 10, verse 39. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

[9 : 19] We are those who believe. We are those who have faith. And within that overall purpose. I mean, that in a sense is the overall purpose of Hebrews, the book of Hebrews, to encourage us to be trend buckers who continue in faith, even in the face of rising unbelief.

Within that overall purpose, chapter 11 has a special place. In fact, the author of Hebrews could really have left chapter 11 out.

We could jump straight from chapter 10, verse 39, to chapter 12 without skipping a beat. So if you look at chapter 12, verse 1.

I'm going to have to leave a few words out of this verse. But chapter 12, verse 1, you could go straight from 10, verse 39. We are of those who have faith and preserve their souls to chapter 12, verse 1.

Therefore, and then halfway through the verse, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that's set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.

[10 : 31] So we could have left out chapter 11. This chapter is essentially one long list of examples of faith from the Old Testament.

It's included so that the writer could say in 12, verse 1, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and so on.

That's the contribution chapter 11 makes. It's to allow him to say, since we're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. It's so that we know that we who believe today stand in an ancient tradition of faith.

And so we can take courage from that. Now, the antiquity of faith, the fact that faith stretches back centuries and millennia, that's not something to be embarrassed about.

In fact, I think that is a strength of Christianity. In the age we live in, where everyone has to invent themselves, everyone has to come up with their own identity and express it and discover who they are.

[11 : 50] In this age, people are adrift. They have no anchor. They have no shore. They have nothing deep to draw on.

They just have to invent themselves anew. People today are, as Jesus saw them in Matthew chapter 9, harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

But the Bible offers something different. It offers a faith that has roots, that reaches back millennia. A faith that has sustained people, that has given hope for hundreds of generations.

A faith that is attested by a great crowd of witnesses. Now, what is faith? What does it mean to believe? Well, Hebrews chapter 11, verse 1, we get into our chapter 9.

It gives us a definition of sorts. Actually, let's look carefully at verse 1 there in chapter 11, and you'll notice it's not one definition, but two overlapping definitions. 11, verse 1.

[12 : 51] Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. So, two things.

The assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. In each case, faith has an object. We're believing for something. But that object is, in some sense, beyond our present perception or possession.

It's future. It's hoped for. Or it's invisible. It's not seen. I don't think this verse is intended as a comprehensive definition of faith, as if every time you come across the word faith in your Bible, you should flick to chapter 11, verse 1 of Hebrews to find out what faith means.

No, it's not functioning like that. I mean, faith, like all words, has a range, a semantic range, a range of meanings. But what verse 1 does is draw attention to the features of faith that are most pertinent in this context.

To have faith is to trust in God for things we do not yet have and for things which we do not yet see. That's faith, as it's being spoken of here.

[14 : 06] So it is today and so it's always been. We stand in a long, ancient succession of those who trust God for things we do not yet have and things we do not yet see.

Verse 2. For by it, that is by faith, the people of old received their commendation. In other words, God commended them, rewarding their faith and including them in the Bible as positive examples for us.

And that's what chapter 11 does. It gives us this long list of people of old and describes their faith and how their faith is instructive for us today.

It's arranged chronologically from the beginning of the Old Testament, the beginning of the Bible onwards. There are 16 individuals who are named as examples of faith.

There are others who are alluded to without being named. Occasionally, what's commended is not the faith of an individual but of the whole people, the people of Israel as a whole.

[15 : 10] Chapter 11 is not an exegesis of the Old Testament. Rather, it offers a theological perspective on the Old Testament in which faith is central and faith is pivotal.

The writer of Hebrews perceives faith as the critical element in the life of God's people, even when the Old Testament text doesn't explicitly mention faith.

In fact, for most of the people listed in Hebrews, the word faith or the word believe or belief, those words don't come up in the text that describe them in the Old Testament. But the writer of the Hebrews looks back and says, what is central, what is in common, the theme, the thread that runs through all these different stories is the thread of faith.

The list doesn't attempt to be complete. In verse 32, the writer admits he doesn't have time to give a complete list. It's a sample.

I was chatting with a uni student who's part of NCS this week and he said his church did an entire sermon series on Hebrews chapter 11. And so basically each talk just took one of the figures who's mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11, one of the examples of faith, and then started in Hebrews and then sort of dived back in the Old Testament to read their background.

[16 : 34] And so each talk became, in a sense, was in a sense a character study on, you know, one person mentioned in Hebrews 11. Well, we only have two talks we're doing on Hebrews this week, Hebrews 11, this week and next week.

So we don't have time for that. So I'm not going to be taking you back into the Old Testament passages. Sometimes I'll fill in a little bit of detail, but I'm not going to take you back into the Old Testament. But I don't think that's a bad thing because the way Hebrews 11 works, the way it functions, the way it impacts us, is by just having this list of ancient examples of faith wash over us.

Now, admittedly, the writer of Hebrews assumes we're going to be familiar with them. There's an assumption here that, you know, there's some, we know the Old Testament context.

And if you're new to faith, if you're not a believer here, if you're new to the Bible, these things are all new to you, there's a good chance you won't be familiar with all the people who are mentioned here.

That's okay, right? You can do background reading in your own time if you want to. But I think there's enough said in Hebrews 11 that you'll get the point, even if some of the figures that are mentioned, you know, you don't know the background.

[17 : 55] Well, given where chapter 11 is going and what verse 2 has led us to expect, verse 3 comes as a bit of a surprise.

Because verse 3 is not about the faith of ancients, but about the faith of present-day believers, whether that's present-day believers in the first century when Hebrews was written or in the 21st century today.

Look at verse 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.

Now, why start here? I mean, the text is kind of flagged that what's going to follow is a list of the faith of earlier believers, Old Testament believers.

Why start here? By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God. Well, I think three reasons.

[18 : 59] First reason, because the writer starts at the beginning of the Bible with Genesis chapter 1. The examples from the Old Testament are arranged chronologically. He wants to go right back to the beginning. Creation.

Second reason, because believing that God created the universe is foundational for every other expression of faith.

It's a baseline belief. Believing in God as creator. A baseline belief that divides people into fundamentally different worldviews.

A baseline belief that divides us between the materialist who says there's nothing but matter. Matter is all there is.

Physical stuff. And the theist who says that behind the universe there's a creator. There is a God who made it all. There could not be a more fundamental disagreement than that.

[20 : 01] You know, the disagreement between the materialist, nothing but matter, and the theist, a creator God. It's not just a disagreement about whether or not God exists.

Can you see that? When you disagree on that, you're not just disagreeing on the existence of God. It's a disagreement about the nature of everything that exists.

Is everything that exists just stuff? Or is everything that exists the creation of God?

See, believing that God created all things, that is a foundational belief, fundamental to every other expression of faith.

Third reason I think the author starts here is because the author begins his list of examples of faith from the Old Testament by drawing us into it.

[21 : 04] By including us with the ancients. He says, by faith, we understand that the universe was created. We believe that God created the universe.

Now, it's important for us today to realise that science cannot tell us why there is something rather than nothing. Science can't tell us why there's something rather than nothing.

It's just, that's a question science can't answer. Do you ever ponder that question? I mean, you believe, if you believe God created the universe, maybe you don't ponder the question because you have an answer to it.

But do you ever ponder that question? Why is there something rather than nothing? Why does anything exist? You know, when I just try and ponder that question philosophically, my mind goes into a head spin.

It's like mental vertigo. Now, why does anything exist? Science can't answer that question. Because science is only concerned with material causes.

[22 : 11] That is, the kind of answers science can give is when there is some law or process in material reality that causes other things to take place.

So there already has to be something rather than nothing before science has anything to say. You know, I guess science can propose theories of the material forces and effects that were operating the very moment there was something.

You know, so the Big Bang or whatever theory there might be. But that doesn't explain why there were any material forces and effects in the first place.

Do you understand? It's just a question. It is beyond the competence of science to rule on why there's something rather than nothing. There's nothing irrational about believing that God created the universe.

But it is an understanding we have by faith, not by sight. We didn't see God create all things. We just see the things God's created.

[23 : 21] We believe God created all things because that is what he's revealed to us. We also believe it because, in my view, it's the most sensible conclusion to draw from the fact that there is something rather than nothing.

It's the belief that best explains the existence of all things. But that's why, this is where Hebrews 11 starts, and this is why Hebrews 11 starts here. Because this is the baseline belief that God spoke the universe into existence.

He made something from nothing. And if that's so, then not only is the existence of everything due to God, but the nature and meaning and purpose of all things is due to God.

So there's our first belief. We believe that God created all things. Then, we also follow in the faith of Abel and Enoch, who believe that the God who had created all things rewards those who seek him.

We believe that God rewards those who seek him. Look at verse 4. By faith, Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous.

[24 : 41] God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. Cain and Abel, this is referred to here in Genesis chapter 4.

Cain and Abel were brothers, sons of Adam and Eve. In Genesis 4, each offered a sacrifice to God. God accepted Abel's sacrifice, but rejected Cain's sacrifice.

Abel was pleasing to God. Cain was not pleasing to God. Why? Verse 4 explains, it's because Abel had faith and Cain did not.

The sacrifice was acceptable because it was not just an empty religious gesture. It was offered by one who actually had faith in God.

Who trusted God. Likewise with Enoch. Look at verse 5. By faith, Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death. And he was not found because God had taken him.

[25 : 44] Now, before he was taken, he was commended as having pleased God. And without faith, it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

This is from Genesis chapter 5, where Enoch is directly taken up into God's presence without dying. Why? Well, it's a unique case in the Bible.

It's mentioned very briefly. The Bible doesn't give a full explanation. It occurs in the middle of Genesis chapter 5. And Genesis chapter 5 is a record of generations from Adam.

And essentially, in this record of generations from Adam, the point of emphasis is that everyone dies. Adam lived so many years, then he died. Seth lived so many years, then he died.

Enosh lived so many years, then he died. On it goes. But when we get to Enoch, in the words of Hebrews 11 verse 5, Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death.

[26 : 51] It's an early sign in the Bible that God saves his people from death. And he was taken up, Hebrews tells us, by faith. Verse 6 expands on what that faith looks like.

Enoch drew near to God. He drew near to God, not only believing that God exists, the creator of all things, but also believing that God rewards those who seek him.

Now, there are various reasons you might believe God exists, but that he does not reward those who seek him. Perhaps God is indifferent.

After all, who are you? A mist. A speck. Here today. Forgotten tomorrow. Why should God be interested in you at all?

But the Bible teaches that God is interested in you. You. As Jesus said, God feeds the ravens. He clothes with splendor the flowers of the field.

[27 : 59] He cares about sparrows. He cares about you. Perhaps God doesn't reward those who seek him because he's angry with you.

After all the wicked things you've done. The cruel words you've spoken. The evil thoughts you pondered. He could never accept you.

He could never be pleased with you. He could never reward you. But the Bible teaches that God will accept you. If only you come to him.

As Jesus said, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened. You don't even need to offer a sacrifice as Abel did.

Because the whole point of Hebrews chapter 7 to 10 is that Jesus has already offered the sacrifice on your behalf. All you need to do is draw near to him.

[29 : 04] All you need to do is come. All you need to do is ask, seek and knock. God is not indifferent towards us. He cares.

God is not angry with us. He forgives. And so we draw near to God. Believing with Abel. Believing with Enoch.

That he rewards those who seek him. But how should we think about the way in which God rewards those who seek him? Well, it's not with worldly, temporal rewards.

It's not with riches, with perfect health, by fulfilling our career ambitions. No. With Noah, with Abraham and Sarah, with Isaac, with Jacob, we believe that God has promised a heavenly city.

Look at verse 7. By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear, constructed an ark for the saving of his household.

[30 : 13] By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. Now Noah's mentioned in passing here, he only gets one verse, but his example is something of a prototype for those who follow, including us.

Noah was warned by God concerning events as yet unseen. That is, the flood, as Catherine pointed out in the kids' talk. The flood that was about to destroy the world. And so by faith, Noah constructed an ark.

It's an activity that made no sense apart from the word of God. Everyone around him was busy building houses and cities and planting orchards and vineyards.

Noah built an ark. He trusted God's word. He recognised that all projects aimed at nothing more than comfort and prosperity in this world were utterly doomed in the end.

And the only project that would last was the one that would carry people through the flood into the new world God had promised.

[31 : 27] Abraham also looked to a future which God had promised, which he did not see.

He walked by faith, not sight. The future God promised Abraham concerned a place. Look at verse 8 to 10. A place. 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 to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. Abraham set out from the place he was living to go to the place that God had showed him and dwelt in the land that God had promised him, the land that God had shown him, as a foreigner living in tents, trusting God to give what he'd promised.

God's promise concerned a place. God's promise also concerned a people, innumerable descendants. Verse 11 and 12. By faith, Sarah, Abraham's wife, herself received power to conceive even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

[33 : 08] 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. In both cases, God's promise of a place, God's promise of descendants, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, and so his subsequent descendants, Isaac and Jacob, they were powerless.

They looked to God to give something God had promised, but something which they themselves could not achieve.

Abraham couldn't claim the land. He dwelt in it as a foreigner, living in tents. Abraham couldn't establish his own descendants.

Sarah was past the age of childbearing. Sarah was barren, moreover. Abraham himself was 100 years old, as good as dead.

The Hebrews verse 12 says here. Faith for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob meant trusting God for a future reward which they could not see and which they were powerless to achieve.

[34 : 27] They had nothing to stand on but the word of God. Their faith looked forward.

They lived in the assurance of things hoped for based on the promise of God. Verses 13 to 16 drive home the point. Look at verses 13 to 16 with me. These all died in faith.

I think the all there is Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And Sarah as well. But yeah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 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. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob died in faith.

[35 : 36] They died as strangers and exiles on the earth. The homeland they were seeking was not this present world, but a better country, a heavenly one.

Now the Bible is talking about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But it's also, and in fact I think here it's especially talking about us. Now we stand in the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

That is what faith was for them. That is what faith is for us. We've just had the federal election. People voted based on promises politicians made to them.

Promises of a better country. Labor promised to reduce hex debts. Increase funding to Medicare.

So that there's more bulk billing available. Maintain fee-free places at TAFE. Now promises of a better country.

[36 : 46] The coalition promised to reduce fuel excise. What else did the coalition promise? I can't really remember.

Not much, I think. That's probably why they lost. They lost. People vote based on promises of a better country. But God has promised us a heavenly country.

A city without foundations. Sorry, sorry. A city with foundations. The new Jerusalem. Something beyond this world. Which we will not see until God draws the curtains on this present age.

Albanese has promised to reduce student debts. Well, God promises to wipe out all your debts. In fact, he already has.

The debt of your sin has been paid at the cross. Albanese promised to make healthcare cheaper. Well, God has promised a new creation in which there's no more sickness.

[37 : 59] There's no more death. There's no more crying. There's no more pain. There's no more ■
We don't look for our reward now.

the best is yet to come. As it did for Abraham, who left his land to go to a new land, as it did for Abraham, faith in God's promise enables us to live radically in the present.

We're not building a permanent home here. We don't seek our comfort here. We desire a better country, a heavenly one.

Now, when you forego luxuries in this life so that you can be more generous, you're looking forward to a heavenly city.

When you give money to support world mission, you're looking forward to a heavenly city. When you share the gospel with someone, you're looking forward to a heavenly city.

[39 : 16] When you forgive someone rather than seeking revenge, you're looking forward to a heavenly city. When you pray your kingdom come, you're looking forward to a heavenly city.

When you sacrificially love others rather than serving yourself, you're looking forward to a heavenly city. The sure and certain promise of God frees us to live radically and generously and sacrificially in this life, knowing that those who trust in God will never lose.

We'll never miss out. God has prepared for us a city. God has prepared for us a city. And what's more, we believe that even death is no obstacle.

We see this too in the example of the ancient men and women of faith. Look at verse 17. From verse 17 to 19. 19, by faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, he who had received the promises, was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, through Isaac shall your offspring be named. He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. This is referring back to Genesis chapter 22, God instructed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, the son God had promised Abraham, the son of whom God had said, through Isaac, through this son, your offspring will be named, through this son, God's promises to Abraham would be fulfilled for all the families of the earth. It was a supreme test of faith. Not only did Abraham face the horror of sacrificing his own son, how could God command such a thing? But also the supreme threat that represented to the promises of God. If Isaac died, what would happen to the promises of God? Such was Abraham's firm confidence in God's word, that he recognised death itself was no obstacle to the promise. He considered that God was able to raise him from the dead and figuratively speaking, this verse says he received him back. What that's referring to is in the last moment, God stayed Abraham's hand and provided a ram to sacrifice in the place of Isaac. Just as God has provided his own son to sacrifice in our place. The faith of Abraham was faith that even death could not thwart the promises of God. That same faith echoed down the generations as Abraham's son and grandson and great-grandson looked to a future beyond their own mortal lifespans. And so verse 20, by faith Isaac, Abraham's son, invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau, looking ahead. Verse 21, by faith Jacob, Abraham's grandson, when dying, blessed each of the sons of

Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. And by faith Joseph, Abraham's great-grandson, at the end of his life made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones, each looking ahead beyond the span of their mortal life. Because death itself cannot obstruct the promises of God. Death is no obstacle.

[42 : 59] I've been reading, we've been reading The Hobbit to our kids. And how many of you have read The Hobbit? Who's read The Hobbit? Let's do a show of hands. Okay.

All right. Okay. I'm about to spoil something for you, for those who haven't read it. Maybe you've seen the movie. I don't know. My favourite chapter in The Hobbit is the chapter Riddles in the Dark.

I'm seeing some nods. That's the chapter where Gollum and Bilbo have this contest of riddles. If Gollum wins, he'll eat Bilbo. If Bilbo wins, Gollum will show Bilbo the way out of the caves.

And so they go backwards and forwards with these riddles. Until Gollum gets to his ultimate riddle. And the answer, for those who've read The Hobbit, is time. Time. In this present age, time means death.

Time means decay. Time means destruction. By the laws of this world, everyone loses.

[44 : 42] time means death. But for those who trust in God, you can miss out in this life. And you won't miss out.

You might never be able to afford to buy a house. Yet you have a home. Your citizenship might be revoked.

Yet you have a country. Your health might fail. Yet you have a resurrection body such as even Gout Gout or Lachlan Kennedy could not imagine.

If you were to die tomorrow and miss out on such amazing benefits as a reduced hex debt, bulk bill doctor's appointments, or a free TAFE education, which seems to be the best our world has to offer, well, you've not missed out.

I have hopes for this life. You have hopes for this life too. Guess what?

[45 : 55] Some of those hopes will fail. Some of those hopes will fail because they're beyond my power. My hopes. Some of my hopes will fail.

Well, simply because of time. Because time for you and me in our mortal state means death.

But hope in God will never fail. God raised Jesus from the dead. He will raise you too. God created the first heavens and earth.

He will make the new heavens and earth too. You who believe in God, you are a stranger and an exile here. Your home is there.

So stand in the ancient faith. Hebrews 12 verses 1 and 2. Amen.

[47 : 01] 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, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.

Amen. ■ ■ ■