

# The Victory of Faith

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Hebrews chapter 11, verse 23. By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they! saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the sons of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth 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 enjoyed as seeing him who is 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, they 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. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David, 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.

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, who for the joy that was set before him, who endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Good morning, everyone. My name is Martin. What an encouragement it has been already this morning, as brothers and sisters have been baptized amongst us. I would like to add my welcome to those who are visiting, especially those who have come supporting a loved one who is here. Great to see you. And let's pray as we come to God's word.

[ 3 : 3 5 ] Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the testimony in this chapter to the faith of many who have gone before. And we thank you this morning for the testimonies amongst us of the faith of those who have been baptized. Lord, we thank you that you are a faithful God, that faith in you, trust in you is never wasted, that it is always answered by your faithfulness and your promises. And we pray that as we spend time meditating on your word this morning, that you would grow each one of us in faith in you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, eight brothers and sisters have stood up amongst us today and received water baptism. Baptism is above all a picture of what God does for us by his son, through his son and by his spirit.

God washes us. God forgives us. God in Christ nailed our sins to the cross, crucifying the old man.

God raises us up with Christ into new life. Baptism pictures what God does for us. But baptism is also an expression of faith, faith on the part of the one who is baptized, faith that God has indeed done all the things that baptism symbolizes.

Washed and forgiven and put sin to death and raised us up. Lola, Bella, Liz, Chez, Carol, Caitlin, Zach and Colin have stood up amongst us and declared their faith in God our Saviour, Father, Son and Spirit.

[ 5 : 37 ] The Bible passage we're considering today is all about faith. We're looking at the second half of Hebrews chapter 11. If you are visiting us today, maybe in support of a loved one, you've landed in the middle of a series or towards the end of a series from the book of Hebrews and indeed in the second of two talks on Hebrews chapter 11.

We saw in the first half of chapter 11 last week that faith is trusting the promises of God. Faith trusts God for things we do not yet have and things we do not yet see.

We also saw in the first half of Hebrews 11 that faith recognizes that not even death is an obstacle to the promises of God. That's why the Bible can say in Hebrews 11 verse 13 that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all died in faith, not having received the things promised.

It's why again it can say at the end of the chapter in the passage we just heard read in verse 39, Now of an even greater procession of believers, Old Testament believers, verse 39, And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised.

Now let me ask you a question. Are Christians, Christian believers, are we in the same situation?

[ 7 : 15 ] That is, do we who believe in Jesus die in faith when we die, not having received the things that are promised?

Do we who believe in Jesus live our whole lives by faith, not receiving what God has promised?

Are those words also true of us? Well, the answer has to be no and yes.

Doesn't it? No and yes. No. Much of what they were promised, much of what they only had in shadow, we have in reality.

They had the sacrificial system, Old Testament believers. We have the cross. They had the descendants of Aaron as priests. We have Jesus.

[ 8 : 32 ] They had the temple. We have access to heaven itself. Already our sins are forgiven. Already we're included in God's family. Already we receive God's spirit.

Hebrews 11 verse 40 says, The reason the ancients died in faith, not having received what was promised, was, verse 40, because God had provided something better for us.

That apart from us, they should not be made perfect. It was for our sake. Promises that weren't yet fulfilled for believers before Christ, have now been fulfilled for us who believe in Christ.

No, our situation is not like theirs. And yet, yes, our situation is like theirs.

The answer is also yes. Our faith is the same. Hebrews 9 verse 28, We eagerly wait for Jesus to appear a second time to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

[ 9 : 52 ] Hebrews 13 verse 14, Here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Yes, we have more than Old Testament believers did, but we still await the final fulfillment of God's promises to us.

It can be said of every Christian who dies. He too died in faith, not having received the things that are promised. And this faith, this faith that is undaunted, even in the face of death, this faith is the faith that wins the victory.

This faith is the faith that overcomes the world. In the second half of Hebrews 11, this is what I want us to see this morning, we see four reasons that faith overcomes the world.

First, faith overcomes the world because it doesn't fear the world's power. That's what we see in the example of Moses in verses 23 to verse 27.

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

[ 11 : 21 ] You may well be familiar with what this is describing here in brief. That Pharaoh had commanded that all the baby boys born to the Hebrews, who were at that time enslaved to the Egyptians, all the baby boys born to the Hebrews would be killed at birth.

But rather than give him up to be killed, Moses' parents hid their child for three months. And then they put Moses in a basket among the reeds by the river, watched over by his older sister, where he was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter, who then protected and adopted the boy and raised him as her own.

Moses' parents defied the decree of Pharaoh at considerable risk, no doubt, to themselves. They were unafraid.

We see it in the actions of Moses himself. Verse 27. By faith, Moses left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Moses defied as an adult. He defied and confronted Pharaoh. He repeatedly called for the Israelites to be set free so that they could serve the Lord.

[ 12 : 41 ] He didn't fear the king. He didn't fear the power of Egypt. He didn't fear the power of the world because he did fear God. He endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Brothers, sisters, we don't need to fear worldly powers. We don't need to fear the power of the world. Now, Christians, let me point out, Christians are always for governments and authorities in that we respect government, we respect authorities as instituted by God.

We pray for human authorities. We pray for governments. We submit to them. We desire that governments rule justly. We seek to live at peace with all people. But we don't need to fear governments.

We don't need to fear prime ministers and presidents and kings. We don't need to fear armies and missiles and bombs. We don't need to fear multinational corporations. We don't need to fear bosses and managers and CEOs.

We know the one who rules all things. We know the one who judges all people. We know where history is heading.

[ 13 : 56 ] We don't need to fear. We know the one who rules all things. We don't need to be on the right side of history. For we're on the right side of eternity. That means believers, Christian believers, make the best protesters, the best whistleblowers and the best campaigners for justice.

Because we can challenge and resist corrupt authority because we have no fear. We can say with Peter and the apostles, we must obey God rather than men.

We've seen that in this past week, for those who have been watching the news, although it's scarcely been reported in the news. 10,000 people who rallied outside New South Wales Parliament to protest a corrupt bill, a corrupt bill that turns nurses and midwives into abortionists.

Thankfully, parts of the bill were struck down in the upper house. But the central part that allows midwives and nurses who should protect life instead to take life, that central part is passed unchanged.

It'll go before the lower house on Tuesday. We still need to pray. There's still time to contact an MP, your local MP. You know, more and more we face a world in which human power is lifted up in defiance of God.

[ 15 : 31 ] But faith overcomes the world because it's unafraid. Secondly, faith overcomes the world because it's patient. Faith does not covet the world's riches.

Look at verse 24 to 26. 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.

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. See, Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

He rejected the treasures of Egypt and the fleeting pleasures of sin. Moses turned his back on all the wealth and prestige and status and comfort which the ruling Egyptian dynasty had to offer.

He was looking to be called the promise of God. The promise of God. Faith enables you to live free of the passion which controls the lives of most people in our world.

[ 16 : 48 ] The pursuit of pleasure and comfort and wealth and ease. I mean, we heard this in Colin's testimony just earlier, didn't we? This is what people live for.

The treasures of Egypt. People live as if this life is all there is. As if every desire must be satisfied now.

As if the only good things we'll ever enjoy are whatever good things we're able to grasp onto now. But we who believe see beyond Egypt.

We see beyond the present age. We look to the heavenly city that is to come. So we don't need to live for everything now. We don't need it.

Isn't that why, at short notice, as a church, we were able to raise so much money to send to Myanmar for disaster relief just a few weeks ago?

[ 17 : 48 ] Money you could have spent on your own comforts. Money that instead you gave up to ease the suffering of others.

Isn't that why, when they received this money, our brother and sister in Myanmar didn't use it for themselves? But at personal cost and at considerable risk, they travelled through that conflict-stricken land to places worst affected by the earthquake and gladly spent and gave that money in the service of others, in all those ways we heard about last week.

Now, I know a young man who won thousands of dollars playing poker online.

The money he won was all from other online gamblers. He was smarter at poker than those other players and so he won the money they lost.

Their money became his. And he was travelling overseas, enjoying his winnings, but he became a Christian and he gave all that up.

[ 19 : 05 ] He returned home and turned to honest and humble and, let's face it, less lucrative work.

Faith doesn't covet the world's riches. Faith is patient. We have the promises of God. We don't need everything now.

Yeah, how freeing that is. That's what Colin testified too in the end, how freeing that was for him. That we don't need everything now.

We don't need to live in restless pursuit of pleasure and comfort and wealth. We're free to live quietly and humbly in pursuit of better things.

Faith. This is the faith that overcomes the world because it does not fear the world's power and it does not covet the world's riches. Thirdly, faith overcomes the world because faith accomplishes mighty works.

[ 20 : 12 ] From verse 28 to 35, we've got kind of a list of achievements of faith and the text is continuing to work through examples of faith from the Old Testament, kind of chronologically.

And we have this list of things people did because they believed God's promises. And so actually these things that people did were not things they did.

They were things God did. Faith simply took hold of things that were promised by God. So in verse 28, by faith Moses kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood so that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

In that final plague on Egypt when the firstborn was struck down, by faith Moses and the people of Israel observed the Passover and found shelter under the blood that God provided.

Verse 29, by faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land but the Egyptians when they attempted to do the same were drowned. The people of Israel trusted the Lord.

[ 21 : 28 ] He parted the sea and they escaped unharmed. Verse 30, by faith the walls of Jericho, this is the time of Joshua, the book of Joshua, by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they'd been encircled for seven days.

God commanded his people just to march around Jericho for seven days with the ark of the Lord and with trumpets and the walls of the city fell and the people of Israel prevailed.

Verse 31, by faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. She was one of the residents of Jericho but she believed God was with the Israelites.

She'd heard of the Lord and so she welcomed the Israelite spies and she was spared in the destruction of the city. Verse 32, what more shall I say for time would not tell, 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 the fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to fight, women received back their dead, received back their dead by resurrection.

Well time did not permit the writer of Hebrews to elaborate on these Old Testament examples and time does not permit us to do so either. But the emphasis of these verses is on their mighty deeds.

[ 23 : 11 ] They trusted God, they trusted God's promises and so they were empowered to do the things that God had raised them up to do, to achieve the purposes for which God had sent them.

Now you may not have to conquer kingdoms or fight lions or rout an army, but there are things God has promised us in Christ. There are things which we who believe in Jesus can do because it's not we who do them, but it's God.

By faith, you can forgive someone who's wronged you. You believe that God has forgiven your offences, which are many.

so you can forgive the wrong someone has done against you. I mean, I'm not just talking about trivial misdemeanours, which, you know, we can just kind of let go.

I'm talking about even deeply painful hurts. You can let go of bitterness. You know, even if the other person doesn't admit what they've done and apologise and repent, even if there's no actual reconciliation of relationship, even if, as might be the case, you cannot trust that person in the same way again, you don't need to live a life of resentment controlled by the hurts you've received.

[ 24 : 47 ] As God has forgiven you, you can be gracious and merciful and forgiving and at peace.

You can do by faith what you could not do alone. By faith, you can change. You believe that God has given you his spirit through whom he sanctifies you, purifies you and makes you holy.

You can let go of old habits. You can put sin to death. You can grow in godliness. You can find freedom from destructive addictions. You do all this not by your power but by God's power because you trust in him.

You know, there are amazing stories I could share with you of young men who have been set free from various addictions through faith in Christ. sometimes the battle has been long.

Almost always it's a battle fought alongside other brothers united in prayer. It's stories of lives transformed, made whole, made pure.

[ 26 : 04 ] There's testimonies of people in our own midst who've been freed from addiction. So don't despair if some lion or army is before you. Take hold of the promises of God.

By faith in God and his promises there are battles we can fight and victories we can win which we would lose every time if we fought on our own. Faith accomplishes mighty works.

Fourthly and finally faith endures terrible hardships. In the rest of verse 35 to 38 the text moves on from the achievements of faith to the endurance of faith from things accomplished to things suffered.

Look at halfway through verse 35 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.

[ 27 : 18 ] 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.

This is the ancient power of faith. Sorry, this is another power of faith. This is another power of faith. Because God has promised us the world to come, those who believe can endure anything now.

Among those who attended the Billy Graham itinerant evangelist conference in Amsterdam in 1983 was a Maasai warrior named Joseph.

Joseph had heard the gospel and accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. And Joseph was so overjoyed with the good news that he began to share the message with anyone he could and with the members of his tribe.

He went back to his village and began telling everyone in his village the good news of Jesus door to door, speaking to any who would listen. Joseph was surprised when the others in his village rejected the message that he'd received.

[ 28 : 44 ] and not only rejected it, they became violent. The men of the village grabbed him and held him down while women beat him with strands of barbed wire.

Then they dragged him from the village and left him to die. Joseph survived that ordeal and crawled to a water hole and then over several days passing in and out of consciousness, he gradually, gradually his strength revived.

So what did he do? He went back to his village, shared his faith with them once more. Jesus died for you so that you might find forgiveness and come to know the living God.

Once more they grew angry. Once more the men held him down while the women beat him. Once more they dragged him outside and left him to die. days later he awoke bruised and scarred and determined to go back.

The third time Joseph returned to his village. This time they attacked him on sight. As they beat him he spoke of Christ.

[ 29 : 59 ] Before he passed out the last thing Joseph saw were the women beating him beginning to weep. he woke in his own bed.

The ones who were beating him were now nursing him back to health. The entire village had come to Christ. If we know we're saved, if we know God promises us life, if we know we have a future, then we can face suffering now.

Any suffering. Our suffering is temporary. The glory of heaven is everlasting. Whatever trial, grief, hardship or persecution we face, it cannot rob us of eternal joy.

And so by faith we meet it with patience and steadfastness and perseverance. perseverance. That's the victory of faith. That's how faith overcomes the world.

Faith does not fear the world's power. Faith does not covet the world's riches. Faith accomplishes mighty deeds. Faith endures terrible hardships.

[ 31 : 25 ] I don't know which of those tests is confronting your faith right now. Whether there is corrupt power to be resisted.

Whether there are seductions of the world to be denied. Whether some great work must be attempted. Or whether some hardship must be endured.

But whichever it is, God's up to it. The promises of God are enough to prepare you for it. The faith you have is the same faith they had.

The God you trust is the same God they trusted. So have faith.

Above all, look to Jesus. chapter 12 verses 1 and 2. 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, 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.

[ 33 : 05 ] Jesus is, verse 2 says, the founder of our faith. Our faith begins with him. He is our Lord, he is our saviour, he is our master, he is our brother.

Jesus is our perfect high priest and our all-sufficient sacrifice. He is the one who has gone before us. He is the one who unlocks for us the promises of God.

Faith begins with Jesus. He's also the perfecter of our faith. It's Jesus himself who will bring everything that God has promised to perfect fulfilment.

He's coming soon. He will not delay and he comes to save all who are waiting for him. Jesus is moreover the supreme example of faith.

For the joy that was set before him, Jesus looked to the future, himself, as he contemplated the cross. He looked ahead. He trusted the father.

[ 34 : 18 ] He believed what was promised. For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

He is the supreme example of faith. Jesus did not fear the world's power. The Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin, the high priest, Herod, the Roman emperor, or his representative, Pontius Pilate, all gathered together against Jesus, all raging against Jesus.

Jesus didn't fear them. Jesus didn't covet the world's riches. He was born in a manger. He had no place to lay his head.

Offered by the devil, a shortcut to all the kingdoms and splendour of the world, he refused, saying, it's written, worship the Lord your God and serve him only. Jesus didn't cover the world's riches.

Jesus endured terrible suffering, falsely accused, mistreated, beaten, spat on, stripped naked, mocked, crucified.

[ 35 : 38 ] Knowing all of that lay ahead, Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem. He didn't just suffer that, he chose that, he submitted to that.

He didn't shy from death, he didn't save himself, he didn't come down from the cross, he endured the cross, despising the shame.

Jesus didn't fear the world's power, Jesus didn't covet the world's riches, Jesus endured terrible suffering and Jesus accomplished a mighty work through his suffering, the salvation of all who believe in him.

Look to Jesus, both an example of faith and the object of our faith, the one in whom we trust.

Look to Jesus, run the race, by faith overcome the world and share in the everlasting joy of your saviour.

[ 36 : 52 ] To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.