

Hebrews 11 (Part 4) v20–40 • The Other Side of Faith

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Here on Sunday morning, we're making our way through the book of Hebrews. Well, we're making our way through the New Testament on Sunday morning. We just happen to be in the book of Hebrews on Wednesday night. We are going through the Old Testament, and we are in the book of Jeremiah. Let's pray.

Jesus, as we get into your Word today, we pray that the ministry of your grace would really just touch hearts. We pray that you would speak loudly, clearly. Our hearts long to hear from you Lord, to be instructed, to be taught because Lord, you are the teacher. As your students, we harken to your voice. We pray, Lord God, that you would give us spiritual understanding. We ask it in Jesus' precious name, amen. Amen. Amen.

I have a question for you that I'll put up on the screen in the form of a kind of an image.



And it's very simple: are you living by faith? Are you living by faith? And I hope that doesn't, that question doesn't make you uncomfortable because I have to tell you something.

When Sue and I got serious about walking with the Lord, we were living in Montana at the time. I was a rock and roll disc jockey, and she was working in

banking, and we weren't living for the Lord at all. But God got a hold of our hearts in a very strong and dynamic sort of a way. And we started attending church.

And the church we attended was kind of moving and shaken from a kind of a Pentecostal charismatic perspective. You might think, wow, that's pretty weird for you, Pastor Paul. But, and it kind of was, frankly. And there was an element there in that church that I kind of recognized even as a new believer and it was an element that really took hold of that faith, that idea of faith. And I felt like at times they kind of took it to unbiblical lengths because it was what we kind of later on came to know as like hyper faith or ultra faith. Where it kind of, they focus on faith to the point where it gets a little elastic and needs to find some balance.

Well, anyway, my response to that was to kind of go the other direction. I don't know if you've ever done that before. But because I saw some abuses in the area of understanding what faith really is, I kind of snapped over to the other side. And that was an error on my part. And I went for years kind of deemphasizing faith just because I had seen it abused.

And this is a fairly common response frankly, by Christians. When we see something in the body of Christ that we feel is out of whack, we tend to kind of pop over to the other side and we lose the same element of balance that we see in other people or in other expressions of the body of Christ.

We've seen it in the area of, like spiritual gifts. The Bible says a lot of great things about spiritual gifts, but there are churches that have abused spiritual gifts to the point where they've gotten weird. Let's just face it. They've just gotten weird and there are those who have gone into those settings and watched the expression of spiritual gifts and they've said they've come away going, okay, that's weird, that's craziness, right?

So they snap over to the other side. And they start believing things like, well, spiritual gifts are not for today. They're no longer functional in the body of Christ. Well, that's just as imbalanced as the people who are whacked out on spiritual gifts because there's nothing in the word that says that they've passed away. They will one day, but that's when we're with Jesus.

So it's a balance that we try to maintain. So now we're, let's come back to faith. Faith is what this chapter is all about. We're going to do our best to finish this chapter today.

But the longer I walk with the Lord and the more I study through the scriptures, the more I see and understand the importance of living by faith. And I mean, we're saved by grace through faith and we're to live each day in faith. You know, we are to live our lives every day, believing and trusting and having confidence in God. And whenever anything creeps into our lives that begins to displace faith, we begin to, or we ought to recognize it as a problem.

I get emails pretty regularly from people who are struggling with faith. And some of them struggle in faith relation; in relation to their salvation. And we talk about salvation. We talk about what it is to be saved and we reiterate, we're saved by grace through faith and this is not of yourselves.

And do you know that really messes with some people's minds? Because there are people in the world who are very, well, they're just not disposed to thinking that way. They're very kind of do-it-yourself kind of people. Maybe you can relate and there are people who are like, I've got to do something. Tell me what I need to do to be saved.

Well, it's not what you do, it's what Jesus did, and you just receive what Jesus did. And that messes with some people then, there are others who are like, I'm good. But some people really struggle, and they are susceptible to teachings that say you have to do X to be saved. And these are the people who get into churches where you have to be baptized to be saved. You have to speak in tongues to be saved, you have to do da da to be saved, or whatever the case might be. And there's a gravitational pull in some people to do something of their own. You see? And so they struggled with faith just flat out just distrusting God.

What's interesting is that there are other people who don't struggle in the area of their salvation, but they struggle with their day-to-day issues. They have no problem believing that they're born again, Jesus died on the cross for me, I'm going to heaven. Thank you. Jesus washed in the blood. I'm a saint. I'm a child of God, but I don't know where my next job is coming from. It's kind of crazy. They can believe God for eternity, but they cannot believe God for a new job. They struggle with their faith. They struggle.

We all struggle, I suppose, in some other way, but I've learned something that's very kind of consistent. Every time I see people struggling with faith, it always seems to come down to one issue, and that is self gets in the way. Somehow in some way self, "me" gets in the way of just trusting the Lord and because I'm fixated on self, I am then blinded from seeing God and all that he can do.

Self gets in the way in so many ways like, for some people it's self-righteousness. I feel like there's something I have to do. I have to be good enough or whatever it can be so many other things.

The reason that the Apostle Paul, you'll remember, wrote his letter to the churches in Galatia. I know that's not the one we're studying today, but the reason Paul wrote that letter was because something was getting in the way of faith.

Now, in that particular situation, you guys remember our study in Galatians, the issue was, the legalists who were making their way into the churches of Galatia. And they were telling the people, you have to be circumcised and that is the way. Jesus and all this other stuff, that's okay too, but you got to be circumcised. And they created a pretty convincing argument for how you had to do this in order to be saved.

And So Paul wrote to them and kind of exposed in the course of that entire letter that what they were being taught by these legalists was really just another clever ploy by the enemy to somehow get their eyes off Jesus and onto self. It's what I've got to do. So Paul wrote to the Galatians and he made a particular statement in that book, which I feel is really the crux of the whole book. In fact, it's one of those statements that Paul makes that sums up the entire book of Galatians, and I want to put it on the screen for you.

Galatians 5:6 (ESV)

...in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith...

That's the only thing that really counts or that matters in the end. It's just faith. He says, circumcision doesn't or uncircumcision. But now remember, something, the reason Paul wrote about circumcision is because that's the particular flavor of self they were being tempted to follow after.

But you could really put anything in those two spots. You could take circumcision out. In fact, let's do it. Let's put blank spaces where circumcision and uncircumcision are. Can we go there? There it is.

Galatians 5:6 (ESV)

...in Christ Jesus neither _____ nor _____ counts for anything, but only faith...

See, you can put a, the statement is true regardless. Anything that has to do with self-effort, anything that has to do with you, something you've got to do, put those in the blanks.

And you know what? It still counts for nothing. And the only thing that remains is faith. So you see, that's one of those interesting statements that you know is important for us to kind of see.

And the reason I remind you of what Paul said in Galatians is because what the writer of Hebrews is going to say here, as he concludes this chapter 11, which of course is all about faith, is that focusing on faith is the only thing that matters. Living your life by faith, trusting in God, putting your hope in Him.

Do you know how we can tell when we've gotten our hope in other things? We get the shakes when life happens, and life happens all the time, happens to me, happens to you. And when we get our focus on those things in life and they start to fall apart all around us, which they're inevitably going to do because this world is falling apart. We start to get the shakes, and the Lord gently reminds us at those times, I never told you to put your focus on that because that's going away. That's passing away. I told you to fix your eyes on Me. But you see, that takes faith. I have to trust, right? Even when everything around me seems to be kind of going down.

So look at what he says here, beginning of verse 20, that's where we're picking up through the end of the chapter. I want you to notice how many times these verses begin with the words by faith.

Verse 20, *“By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²²By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.*

²³By 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. ²⁴By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸By faith he kept the

Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

²⁹By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

³²And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched 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. ³⁵Women received back their dead by resurrection.” (ESV)

Can you stop there for just a moment? I promise we'll finish out the rest of the chapter, but what I want to do is I want to focus here a little bit on this wow section that we just read, these, all these things. He's going through these verses and he's giving us biblical character after biblical story, and he's highlighting the importance of faith and how they walked in faith to do these incredible things.

Now, I want to remind you of a point we brought up last week. We've read through these books of the Old Testament. We've studied through them, and we've read about all these characters that he's talking about, all these prophets and all these various characters that are mentioned here by name. And we know that some of them struggled in the area of faith. We know that. I mean, he brings up Sampson. Sampson, the guy was a carnal flesh pot I mean, he was a rebellious, disobedient, carnal man.

And he brought up some others, Jephthah. Don't ever name your kid Jephthah. The guy, he was an interesting sort of a rough guy, but he made a stupid vow to the Lord. I mean, just dumb.

I look at some of these other people, Barak, he wouldn't go to war without taking Deborah with him. And Gideon, Gideon yeah, he was scared out of his mind because of the Midianite army. And so when it came time to thresh the wheat, instead of going up on a hill, which is how they would thresh wheat in those days because the wind would carry the chaff away while they were threshing, he was doing it down in an area that was a wine press, just because he was so afraid. Remember how the Lord appeared to Gideon, in hail almighty warrior and Gideon was like, what?

But there was faith, there was faith there. Here's what's interesting about this, and we talked about this last week when God looks back on your life, he doesn't see all the things that you and I see, which are the failures because we've all failed miserably sometimes in our faith.

I could fill an entire message just telling you the testimony of my failures, failures of faith. But while I could sit and I could relate those to you and I don't know, it might encourage some of you, I'm not really sure how. The Lord doesn't remember them. He's chosen not to remember, here's why, they're under the blood of the lamb. Our failures are under the blood of Jesus Christ.

And what does He see in your life now? Faith. Your faith. Now, in some people it might be small, it might be, well, you had faith for x. I don't know, it was this little thing over here, but you had faith. Well done. For some of you, He's going to look at your faith and He's going to say, whoa, you had faith to move mountains. Well done.

But that's all that He is going to look at. He's just going to look at the faith. All the other things are under the blood they've been dealt with at the cross. And that's why as we read through these characters who we know from the Bible studies we've done in the Old Testament, we know they weren't perfect people. We know they failed miserably from time to time. We see faith after faith after faith. They have faith and that's what God sees.

And we, boy, we read through this list and we're like, this is thrilling. All the things they did through faith, it's thrilling. I made a bullet list out of it because it was so thrilling. Here, let me put it on the screen for you.

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
- received back their dead

Look what they did.

They conquered kingdoms through faith. We think of people like David, Joshua, some of the kings.

They enforced justice. Again, some of the kings, some of the great prophets.

They obtained promises. Probably the first thing we think of is Abraham and Sarah.

It says they stopped the mouths of lions. Got a character in the Bible in mind? How about Daniel?

Quenched the power of fire, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, right?

Escaped the edge of the sword, David did and or spear. And Jeremiah, Jeremiah escaped the edge of the sword. We've been talking about that on Wednesday night.

Were made strong out of weakness. Now we come back to Gideon, the weak man who was threshing wheat in a wine press was made strong to conquer the Midianite horde with just 300 men. It was through faith.

Became mighty in war.

Put foreign armies to flight.

Received back their dead.

You look at this listing and you think, yes, yes, that's faith! Where do I sign up to do those things? I'd like to do those things. Thank you very much. Those are fun. I mean there's victory written all over it. Conquering! We like to be victorious. We like to conquer, victoring, conquering, I like conquering. Conquering is good, sign me up for conquering God. I'll do that. Yeah. It's the faith we want to have. Who wouldn't want to have it?

Here's the point, the author of Hebrews is going to go on in the remainder of this chapter, and he's going to introduce us to the flip side of this coin that we call faith. And he's going to begin to give us a description of faith that I got to be honest with you, is not going to naturally resonate with your hearts in terms of what faith is or what faith produces.

And yet he proclaims, and will proclaim, it as faith nonetheless. So we're in the middle of verse 35. I stopped there on purpose. Let's begin reading there again. Middle of verse 35, look what he says, “*Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life* (or if you will have a better resurrection).

Verse 36, “*Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment.* ³⁷*They were stoned, they were sawn in too* (By the way, we believe that traditionally, it is believed that Isaiah was killed that way, the prophet Isaiah. It's not given to us in the word, but they were killed with the sword), *they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—* ³⁸*of whom the world was not worthy— wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”*

By the way, I didn't bother to make a bullet list out of this group, because I really didn't want to think much about it, honestly. Because I thought, I don't really want to sign up for any of these.

But you know what? This is the part of the letter that really should have been most encouraging to the recipients that this author was writing to. Because you see, they were going through really hard times. I mean, they were suffering for their faith.

And what he is talking to them about in these latter verses is the fact that in the midst of those great difficulties and those horrendous persecutions, they hung on to faith. They laid hold of faith and they refused to let go. And he's highlighting the fact of that tenacity of faith. They say, “I don't care what's happening on the outside. Maybe I'm not dealing with any of those things that we would call victorious Christian living, but I'm going to have faith in God anyway. I am going to trust in the Lord anyway. I'm going to continue to cling to him”.

And to underscore just how significant this is and what a big deal it was. Look with me at verse 39, this kind of ups the ante a little bit, “*And all these* (these people he is talking about), *though commended through their faith* (so they were commended for having faith), *did not receive what was promised...*”

Well, there's the last bullet point that I don't want to think about. The fact that they endured with faith and still didn't receive what they were expecting. But he's telling us here that these people died with their faith intact. They died with their faith intact, even though they never saw the completion of that faith.

And so what we see here is this introduction that the author is giving to you and me about this definition of faith, or if you will, what it is to have victory in faith, a victory that doesn't come naturally. This new definition seems to contain nothing of those earlier bullet points that we put up on the screen. There's nothing there. You don't see any of that kind of victory in these people, and yet he says they were victorious. And they had faith and it's a definition that there's.

I'll be honest with you, a lot of Christians just don't even recognize. We have adopted, how do I put this? We have adopted a definition of faith that is more what I call triumphalism.

And what that means is faith, faith always has to triumph in the particular definition or vein of what I think conquering ought to look like. And if it doesn't look like what I think it ought to look like, then it isn't conquering, it isn't victory, right? You see what I'm saying? We do that, we do that as Christians.

And we have this fairly narrow definition of what faith ought to produce in our lives. Moving mountains, great miracles and all these other things that kind of go along with it. And what we end up doing is we end up missing sometimes what real faith is because even though it's right in front of our eyes, we miss it because we have a definition that is too narrow.

And that's what the writer of Hebrews is doing for you and me in this passage. He's enlarging our definition, our understanding of what faith is, and he's saying, you know what? When people hang onto faith, even when it looks like they've had disaster, but when they hang onto their faith in God, that's still a victory. Even when they pray and they don't get what they prayed for, but they hang onto faith anyway, that's a victory. That is a conquering of unbelief.

There's a couple of passages that always come to mind when I think about things not being what they appear. The Apostle Paul was an interesting man who spent probably the majority of his time as an apostle behind bars. He was either in some kind of a lockup or under house arrest or something.

I mean, the guy got in trouble all the time and that looks very much like a defeat for a man who is called to go out, share the gospel and start churches. And it's pretty tough to do that when you're behind bars.

When he came to the area of Philippi, he began to kind of share the gospel with some people, they went down to the water's edge and they started sharing the gospel with some women who were there and there was a particular woman. Who came to faith in Christ, and she was a woman of some means, and they

began to meet with her and others. And people were starting to get saved and it was pretty cool.

But there was a problem in Philippi. There was this little girl who kept following Paul and his people around, and she would shout. She would shout wherever Paul went, she'd follow him, and she would shout and she would say, these men are servants of the most high God, and they're showing you the way to be saved. And fundamentally that wasn't wrong. But the problem is she was doing it through the power of a demonic spirit that had invested in her. And God doesn't need Satan to promote his ministry.

And so Paul just kind of put up with this, it says for days, finally he had enough. And the Book of Acts tells us that he turned and looked straight at the little girl, but threw the little girl right to the demon. And he said, "in the name of Jesus, come out of her," and of course the demon did.

The only problem is you see this little girl was a slave and she actually made a pretty fair amount of money for her owners by telling fortunes through this demonic spirit. Well, suddenly they realized their ability to make money through this poor little girl was gone. And so they started to make all kinds of accusations against Paul and Silas, and the people that were with him. And the people of the town got all upset and lathered up, and they hauled him before the authorities and made again, more accusations, and they ended up throwing him into jail, beating them senseless, and throwing them into the middle. And you guys know the story. (See Acts 16:16-40)

It's a cool story about how God eventually brought him out. But that looks pretty bad. When somebody comes to your town and starts talking to you about Jesus and then you find out, oh, by the way, he's in jail. It kind of looks like, really, he's in jail. What? What happened? Well, there was a misunderstanding. The guy's in jail. Doesn't look too good and it kind of looks like a defeat.

Well anyway, Paul eventually gets free. He goes out, continues on with his ministry. Then he decides I need to write a letter to these people in Philippi. Guess where he is when he is writing his letter to the Philippians? Yep. He's back in jail. Then again, that doesn't look all that great and it got a letter from Paul. Oh yeah. How's he doing? Well, he is in jail again.

That doesn't look very good for Paul or for the gospel. In fact, that kind of looks like a defeat. So Paul actually wanted to speak to that. So he wrote to the church in Philippi. He said, guys,

Philippians 1:12-14 (ESV)

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me (and he's talking about his incarceration) has actually served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole Imperial Guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

What is Paul doing here in this passage? He's enlightening them of the, to the fact that even though this situation looks like a defeat, actually God is bringing it into the place of a victory, okay? But it takes faith to see that. It takes faith to see victory in what appears very much to be defeat.

When you talk to people who've gone through this last year, well, better than a year now and dealt with the whole global pandemic that we've all been forced into. It's tough sometimes to hear people say anything terribly positive about the things that have happened because, frankly, some people have lost loved ones or friends, and that's not fun at all.

And we've all had our freedoms curtailed. We've had limitations and restrictions placed on us, which we've not liked. Some people, some of you maybe even are in businesses that have suffered greatly from an economic standpoint because of the pandemic. Some of you might have even lost your job, had to go find work elsewhere. It's just, it's been a very upsetting deal that has gone on for the last more than a year.

Here's the interesting part, people have gotten saved just because of the pandemic. People have gotten back into reading their Bible just because of the pandemic. People have decided to get serious about God again, just because of the pandemic. Some of you might be in church today just because of the pandemic.

So what's interesting about this is that, this is the flip side of looking at something that looks very much like a big fat bummer and realizing that God has been working in the midst of it. And that changes you see, how we see faith, how we recognize faith and our trust in God. It begins to help us to see that even though we're going through this rotten junk, I have faith in God that he's doing good things, that he actually has good things going on in the midst of it, you see.

There's another passage that comes to mind, and it's from Paul's letter to Timothy, his second letter. This is a fascinating statement that he makes several

here in this passage in fact. Oh, and let me just tell you again, he's back in jail. He's not just back in jail. He knows he's not going to get out this time. He knows that he's going to die, so that's what he's looking forward to.

Now, as a Roman citizen, they would give him what they considered to be a humane death. They'd cut his head off. If you're not a Roman citizen, you have to hang around on a cross for a few days and suffer the torment of that. But still, he's looking at death square in the face and he writes to Timothy, and here's what he says.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 (ESV)

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

This is so incredible people. Because yeah, Paul understands and he knows that this is going to end in his physical death. He says, “the time for my departure has come,” but what is he focused on? He says, “I've kept the faith.”

Now that looks like defeat when you get your head cut off. You know, when you get hauled out of jail and they go, this is it for you, pal. And they take you out and do whatever they're going to do, and they kill you. That looks very much like a big fat problem. And yet Paul says, “I've kept the faith, I kept the faith.”

So the life of faith can appear very much at times like defeat. Very much. I want you to read again what it says here in verse 39. Would you look with me in your Bible at verse 39? “*And all these* (he's talking about these people who went through all these horrific things), *though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised* (they didn't get what they, what was promised)...”

I get notes from people all the time who tell me that they've prayed and they've prayed and they've prayed and they didn't get what they were praying for. And they write to me and they say, “So Pastor Paul, tell me what I need to do?”

As if, and I probably annoy them to no end when I respond by saying, “Well, you need to just have faith in God. You need to put your faith in God.”

And they're like, “Pastor, you don't seem to understand what I'm saying to you here. I'm telling you that I've been praying and I didn't, I didn't hear from God. I

didn't get what I prayed for. So you see, I failed in the area of faith and you're telling me to put my faith in God. I'm telling you I failed.”

And I think to myself, really? You see, the failure was not the fact that you didn't get the answer to your specific prayer. The failure is that you let go of your faith. You decided if I don't get what I want, then my faith is going to hit the road. I'm going to kick it to the curb. That's the failure you see. If I don't get the object of my faith, then where's my faith? I'll tell you where it is. It's in your refusal to let go regardless of what you get or don't get. That is real faith!

That's something that sometimes the people in the hyper faith movement don't even spend time on acknowledging. Because they're all fixated on what you get, the victory of faith and the victory of faith are those bullet points that we put up earlier. But there is a victory that we don't really much like to think about, but it is a victory nonetheless, and it's a victory that many Christians wouldn't recognize if it hit them in the head. But it is victory because they kept the faith, they kept the faith.

There is a passage in the Book of Revelation that speaks to this somewhat. Let me just set this up very quickly before we look at it, and we're going to kind of close with this. But in the Book of Revelation, it talks about the fact that there will be believers on the earth during the great tribulation who will suffer greatly for their faith.

Now, any one of you who have been around Calvary Chapel very long, you know that I don't believe that is the church. I believe the church is taken before the time of the great tribulation. Some of you disagree with me, that's fine. We're not going to break fellowship over it. But I don't believe, I don't believe the church is going to go through the great tribulation, but there will be believers.

People ask me sometimes, “Pastor Paul, will people, will there be believers on the earth during the great tribulation?”

“Oh yes, absolutely.”

Hey, when the church leaves, when the church is taken away, there are going to be many people who have been on the fence with the gospel. Maybe they'd heard the gospel, they just decided to, I don't know. I'll have to think about it.

Well, when the church is gone, they're going to have plenty of time to think about it, and they're going to think quickly and they're going to come to Christ.

People are going to come to Christ by the hundreds and thousands, maybe even more. We call these people the tribulation saints, and they will endure the great tribulation and they will be martyred for their faith. It talks about it in Revelation chapter 13. Let me show it to you, it says,

Revelation 13:5, 7a, 10 (ESV)

And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to (look at these guys) conquer them. If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. (But then look at this last sentence) Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

See, that doesn't fit our typical picture of needing to have faith because we're already told that they're going to get conquered. Says right there, says that the enemy, the antichrist, is going to be given authority during the great tribulation to conquer the tribulation saints. That looks very much like a defeat. And yet he says, it calls for faith and the kind of endurance that goes along with faith, right? And yet there are too many Christians who look at that kind of a scenario and they say, well, that's not faith at all, that's failure.

And speaking of those very saints, by the way, we go on in passage in Revelation 12, and it says,

Revelation 12:11 (ESV)

...they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

This is how, what their faith did, “*they have conquered him*”, (and that refers to the enemy, look at this) “*by the blood of the lamb...*” (that is the people, that's their faith is in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross), “*they conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony...*” (And that is the faith and confidence in God's transformational power in their lives. That's what produces the testimony of our lives. And it says why) “*they loved not their lives, even unto death.*” And yet they conquered. They loved not their lives, even unto death, and yet they conquered, they were victorious.

Yes, the tribulation saints are going to pay with their lives for coming to Jesus Christ. But they will hang on to their faith and they will trust Him to the very end, and they will conquer him, the enemy, by the blood of the Lamb. And that's what we're being asked to see in these last verses of Hebrews chapter 11,

that there is another side to faith that looks very dark and dreary, but if we have the eyes to see, we can see that faith is there as well.

Let me read the last two verses. We'll read there from 39 again because it goes with verse 40. And it simply says, *“And all these though, commended through their faith did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us (that's the new covenant that he's been writing about in this whole letter), that apart from us, they should not be made perfect.”*

In other words, the Old Testament saints had to wait for the church to come in to interview, so that God's plan to fulfill his promises to them would be done with us, with the church. So in its kind of an interesting way, the Old Testament believers were made to wait for the greater revelation of the New Testament and the church and the new covenant that is revealed through the church. So anyway, with that, we close out Hebrews chapter 11. Let's stand together.

This is one of those important chapters in the Bible to help us to widen our perspective as to what faith is. So I come back to that original question we started off the service with, how's your faith? So don't think of your faith anymore as, well I'm not getting what I want so apparently my faith isn't any good.

No. I'm talking about are you hanging on to Jesus, regardless? That's why I, that's my question. Are you hanging onto Him? Is your confidence in Him, regardless of what's happening in the world, regardless of what's happening? Regardless, it's not dependent upon circumstances. It's dependent on Him. His character, His promises, right?

We say, Lord, I'm going to trust in you though the earth gives way, and the mountains fall into the sea. I will trust in you. And that's it.

Father God, I pray for all of us to have our eyes opened further, to know and understand the depth of real, real faith. Faith to trust, faith to hope, confidence in you regardless of the circumstances.

Touch our lives with real faith, that tenacious holding on and refusal to let go. Lord, I know you're good, and I know that without faith it is impossible to please you. So Lord, I just set aside all the failures in my life from the past, and I choose to walk in faith to trust you no matter what, to put my hope in you.

Let it be So Father, let it fill our hearts for we pray it, in the name of Jesus Christ and all God's people said, amen. Amen. God bless you.