

# Encouragement to Endure to the End

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As I mentioned, we're going to be in Hebrews 10 starting out, and we'll work our way through 11. And I'm going to pray again because I need the Lord's help, so if you'll bow with me. Lord, we come again, just confessing, God, our need; confessing my need, Lord. We are looking to You. We are looking to Your Word. We are looking to grow in understanding. Not to be hearers only, but doers of Your Word for Your glory. So we ask for Your help again, O Lord. God, use this for good. Use this for Your glory. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

We're going to start in Hebrews 10:32. If you'll follow along with me with the reading of God's Word. "But recall the former days, when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property. Since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For yet a little while, and the coming one will come, and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith. And if he shrinks back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve the souls."

Chapter 11, I'm going to read v. 1-2 here. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. 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 jump down to v. 8. "By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive 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 in the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God."

Now v. 23. "By faith, Moses, when he was born was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw the child was beautiful and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith, Moses when he had grown up refused to be called a 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."

Now v. 39. "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."

We'll end in chapter 12:1-2. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so easily, 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."

Starting back in v. 32, I want you to take note. The author here is writing to Christians. And he's writing to Christians, he says in v. 32, who are enduring a hard struggle with suffering. And he speaks later on there of affliction and the plundering of their property. If you look down at v. 36, he says these Christians have need of endurance; of perseverance. The need to endure and persevere is what the writer of Hebrews in chapter 10 and heading into chapter 11 is addressing. And brethren, we all must persevere and endure. Note in v. 39 it says that true Christians are not those who shrink back or fall away and are destroyed. But true Christians have faith and preserve the soul. And this is what he hopes to address when he comes to chapter 11. Enduring faith.

We know that's the topic, because if we skip forward now to chapter 12 again, and we look at v. 1 - at the end of v. 1. Look what he says there as he's encouraging them to do what? To run with endurance the race that is set before them. And brethren, that's what I hope to do tonight. I hope to encourage you all to run with endurance the race that has been set before us. What is this race that we are running? The word "race" is the word "agon." It is where we get our word agonize. It is an athletic term that Paul uses often to describe the Christian life. He doesn't refer to it because the Christian life is a game. He refers to it because the Christian life is very strenuous. It is very rigorous. It is full of struggles and wrestlings for those who are competing in the race.

What is this rigorous, strenuous, agonizing fight that all of us are in? It is the fight of faith. It is the fight to believe. Paul uses those same words when he writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6. A verse we're all familiar with. And he says to him there, Timothy, fight (that's the word) the good fight (that's the word again) of faith. Take hold of eternal life. And in his second letter to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:7, he tells Timothy at the end of his life, he says this, he says I have fought the good fight, the good agony. And I have finished the race, the course set before me. I have kept the faith. The fight of faith. The battle of enduring and persevering faith that every true Christian is in is the most strenuous battle on earth. There's an internal struggle living in flesh. There are external struggles and warfares being waged, and our enemies on the external are not just neutral in that they are just there to distract, but they have a goal, and that goal is that you would not endure to the end. That you would be destroyed. That you would fall away. And the world with all of its interests and all of its enticements are continually pulling at you and calling you to abandon the faith and to turn to them. This fight of faith is the most serious fight on earth. Because I'll remind you, in chapter 10:39 it says those who do not endure to the end are destroyed.

I don't know about you, but I often feel very weary and weak. At times, I don't know if I'm going to make it to the end. I can say personally and pastorally, right now, that I'm in one of those times, where I don't know if I'm going to make it to the end of a day, let alone the end of this race. I need to be encouraged. I need to be built up. I need to have hope. And I really believe that's why the Lord brought me here to Hebrews 11, because that's exactly what the writer is addressing. He is here pastorally to give hope to people in the face of adversity who don't know that they're going to make it to the end, but, oh, they want to, and they need encouragement; they need hope. And that's what I hope to give you and my own soul tonight.

Before we even open chapter 11, let me give you one bit of hope already. Beloved, this tension to endure to the end; this fight of faith is one of the evidences that you're converted. The lost don't have the fight of faith to endure to the end. I remember one brother in our church. I met him 10 or 11 years ago. When I met him, he was 10 years into an addiction with methamphetamines. He was living under a bridge when God's providence brought our lives to intersect. I picked him up one morning at 6 a.m. And I sat in the car with him and I preached the Gospel to him. And for the next six months, I don't think I can say daily, but nearly daily, I met with this brother or talked with him on the phone, and I would go through the Gospel again. And I would call him to repentance and faith. And I would say, brother, today is the day of salvation. Repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. And six months later, my phone rang, and I picked up the phone and it was Raudi. And Raudi said to me, I'm saved. I'm saved. And you know what this brother tells me? Now, remember, he was ten years addicted to methamphetamines. He was homeless living under a bridge. And when he calls me today, he'll say, "The Christian life is such a battle."

See, he didn't have this battle before. He had other battles, but not this battle. And when he compares the battle he's in now to endure to the end, to finish the race, to keep the faith, it is in no way comparable to what he was going through before. This one is the battle. This is the battle. So if you face the battle; if you're experiencing the battle, then know this, beloved, that is good evidence of your conversion. If you know not what of I speak about when I speak of this battle, you need to be concerned.

I think if we're honest as we approach chapter 11 now, we want it to say something like this: Well, God, You are sovereign. You control all testings and trials in our life. And the way we will persevere to the end, I hope that Hebrews 11 says, because You reign and rule over it all, I think the way we'll persevere to the end is you'll just remove the trials. You'll remove the struggle. You'll remove the fight and we'll all make it to the end. Beloved, we don't find that here in chapter 11. In fact, we don't find that anywhere in the Bible. What we do find in the Bible is Paul strengthening the souls of the disciples; encouraging them to continue in the faith and reminding them that through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God. I want you to be encouraged, saints, because chapter 11 has something better to offer than the removal of the fight. It has hope to conquer and finish well. Starting in v. 1, the writer gives us a definition of faith. It's not an all-encompassing definition, but he gives us a definition. And it says here that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, it is the conviction of things not seen. We have parallelism there, where the second stanza there gives a further insight to the first one. Faith is confident assurance in what we are hoping for and it is being certain of what we do not see.

Do not be mistaken, beloved. Faith is not wishful thinking. Faith is not just hoping for the best. Faith is not saying, I hope it all turns out in the end. It is not speaking positive affirmations into your life. But rather, it is concerned with realities for the future. One brother put it this way: Christian faith is confident assurance and settled conviction that what is presently unseen regarding the future, but has been promised by God, will come to pass. Let me repeat that. Christian faith is confident assurance and a settled conviction that what is presently unseen regarding the future, but has been promised by God, it will come to pass. The faith of the true Christian which is given by God is so assured and settled regarding the future because of the promises given and the faithfulness of the One Who has given them, and the reliability of the

One Who has given them, that it actually transforms how we live in the present. In other words, think of it this way. In faith, we are so assured that what God has promised for the future and we lay hold of that, that it actually changes how I choose and act today in the present. And brethren, we know this. If your faith does not change how you act; if your faith does not produce works, it is dead. It must change how we live.

Now in v. 2, the writer says, "the people of old were commended for their faith." Who commended them? God did. God commended them for their faith. And this is important because right away this is already encouraging for those who are facing this fight of faith to endure to the end. Brothers and sisters, they probably will not write books about us and our steps of faith in this life. But it teaches us here that even when we take steps of faith, privately, moment by moment, in our heart, turning away from sin and turning to our Lord, that God sees it. In fact, in v. 6 it tells us without faith we cannot please God. Which tells us this, that when we in our moment-by-moment lives turn from sin and temptation and continue to express our faith in God, that it pleases the Lord. That's encouraging to me. Your steps of faith are not unrecognized or unknown. The Lord sees them.

Now what the writer does here in v. 4-38, he gives us examples of faith; examples of persevering faith. I want you to remember before we look at two of them briefly, the goal of the writer in Hebrews 10-11 is to encourage Christians to persevere and endure to the end. The examples we're going to look at are found in v. 8-10. I want you to look at two things I'm going to point out. There's much to point out. I'm only going to focus on two for right now. First, I want you to take note of this. That their faith produces obedience. Their faith produces works, actions, decisions in the present reality.

Second, note this: When they are faced with a testing of their faith, I want us to take notice together what it is that they set their eyes upon before they act or ask they are acting. First, v. 8-10 again. "By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go to a place that he was to receive 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 in the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God." By faith, Abraham did what? He obeyed. His faith brought about obedience. He couldn't see with his physical eyes, but trusting in the promises of God with the eyes of the faith of his heart, it says in v. 8, he went out. It says in v. 9, that he lived in the land of promise. And I want you to know this, these acts of faith, these steps of obedience caused by faith, they were costly to Abraham. He left everything he knew to obey God and go. He turned away from everything he knew and went where God called him to go.

Now, what did Abraham look at with the eyes of faith? In other words, how was he able to persevere in the midst of this testing? Look at v. 10. "For he was looking forward (those are the eyes of faith; things unseen) to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God." What was he trusting in? A promise made by God. He trusted in God's faithfulness and therefore trusted the promise, and based upon that, he acted in faith. He was sure of things that he could not presently see, but he was so convinced by the trustworthiness of God and the promises that were made to him, he took an act of faith, and he believed God and he went.

One more example in v. 24-26. "By faith, Moses when he was growing up refused to be called a 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." Moses had all that the world could offer him sitting freely at his feet. But by faith, it says, he acted and he chose. He chose to align himself with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. How did he do that? V. 26 "He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt. For he was looking to the reward." God's promise regarding the future is what Moses casts his eyes upon, and in seeing the reward that was promised and laid hold of in faith, he chose to turn away from all that was before him - the fleeting pleasures of sin. Moses was convinced, certain, that he had settled conviction regarding God's promise.

There are a lot more examples here in chapter 11 that we could go through, but we would keep seeing the same thing. Men and women, believing in God and His faithfulness, therefore being convinced of the promises and the reward of the future, and in light of that, choosing in the present to obey God. You say, how is that encouraging? Because I don't know about you - I'm going to be real candid with you here. Sometimes I read through Hebrews 11:4-38 and I see these acts of faith, and I say, wow, those are some faithful people. But instead of encouraging, it can be discouraging.

Why would it be discouraging? Because I look at my own life and you look at your own life, and you see doubting of God and not responding in faith in situations that are way less than what these people were tested in, and they are prevailing in faith and I'm faltering in faith in way smaller calls of obedience. How is this encouraging? Sometimes it can discourage us even more. You begin to think if I'm struggling in smaller tests of faith, and no one's asked me to sacrifice my kids yet; no one's asked me to march around the city with walls; I'm not being flogged, chained, imprisoned or sawn in two. Is there hope for me? Because I'm failing at the smaller tests of faith. And these examples put before me are believing in the greater tests of faith. I want you to know, beloved, this way of thinking about this chapter is the exact opposite of what the writer wants to do in you and to do in me. I want you to know that the chapter does not end in v. 38. It doesn't end with looking at these examples. You say, well, where does it go? Well, look at v. 39 with me. And all these - the examples in v. 4-38 - "though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised." What does that mean? Are they saved? Yeah. Are they in heaven? Yes. They demonstrated faith. They were commended through it. But they did not receive what was promised. These people of old were trusting in the redeeming promises of God, but they never saw God's plan of redemption unfold completely. In fact, Peter tells us that those of the Old Testament, the prophets searched and inquired to see how this would be unfolded. Look back at chapter 11:13, it says these all died - they died believing, persevering to the end, but not having received the things promised, but what? Having seen them and greeted them afar. God made promises to them. They were afar. They couldn't see the clarity of the promise. They trusted in God because of His faithfulness. And then believing in that promise to be fulfilled, they acted in faith and endured to the end. But they were promises of anticipation. These saints of old had promises, but they looked at them through lenses of types and shadows. And yet by God's grace and God's power they were able to act in faith, holding fast to the promises that were unfulfilled in their lifetime.

You say what kind of promises did He make to them? Do you remember in Genesis 22:18? Where it says, "In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." And when

you read Paul's account of that in Galatians 3, it says this, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying in you, all the nations shall be blessed." They believed in a future hope of redemption, but never saw it fulfilled. They trusted in that and they were saved. You say well how does that encourage us? Because of v. 40. "Since God has provided something better for us, that apart from us, they should not be made perfect." Saints, be encouraged, because if in looking to God, the saints of old held fast to promises of anticipation, and based upon that responded in faith, and when facing death and many trials, we have it better, it says.

Why do we have it better? Because we are not looking at promises of anticipation and to be fulfilled, but we are looking at promises accomplished and secured. If the saints of old who have gone before us can endure to the end and finish the race by God's grace, and looking at promises anticipated, there's hope for us, because the grace of God is the same, but we have it better because we are looking at promises already secured. How are those promises secured? In the person and work of Jesus Christ. In His death, burial, and resurrection was secured all the promises that God has made regarding His redemptive plan. So where they by faith believed God's promises looking forward but never saw it fulfilled, we now by faith trust in God and His promises, but we look back, and now it is better because we see them fulfilled and secured in Jesus Christ.

I don't know about you, but that gives me a lot of hope. Because the purpose of Hebrews 11 is not that you would look at these examples of old and compare yourself or your faith to how they acted, but you would see them as testimonies of people who did believe in God to the end. And they proved God's faithfulness. But the purpose of Hebrews 11 is to point to them as examples that we can look at and see that yes, they made the right choices and God is faithful to those who endure to the end, but the purpose of Hebrews 11 is actually to encourage you that you now, this side of the cross, you've got it even better. Don't just fixate on the examples before us. Look at them. See that they made it to the end believing in God, but now recognize this. We, here, this side have it better.

One brother put it this way: What's easier to lay hold of and trust? If I tell you I'm going to buy you a house and I say just trust me? Or if I tell you I'm going to buy you a house, and I hold up the deed and it says "paid in full" with your name at the bottom. That's easier to trust. Paid in full. My name's on the bottom. It's easier to believe. It's not that God's promises to the old saints were insufficient. It is that we on this side now look at those promises and it says "paid in full." And it has your name on it. That's trustworthy. We saints have been provided something better. And that's why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:20, "All the promises of God find their 'yes' and 'amen' in Jesus Christ." It has been made clear to us, saints.

And you might say, well, Jesse, I see that we have it better. I see that we have it more clear. I see that the promises have been secured in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Then why do I still struggle? That's why he wrote chapter 12:1-2. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." What's the purpose of mentioning the Old Testament saints? They are testimonies that a life in faith to God never disappoints in the end. Have you ever in your life chosen to respond in faith to God's promises and turn from sin, and after that, been disappointed? Never once has the believer done that. These lives of these

people who went before us bear witness that if we choose Christ and continue to choose Christ that in the end, it goes well for us. They testify to the faithfulness of God for those who trust in Him and look to Him until the end. And in seeing them and knowing we've been provided with something better, we should be encouraged and compelled to do what here? To lay aside every weight and sin which so easily besets us.

One of the reasons we still struggle is because we have weights in our life. In comparing it to the athletic event, what do weights do? If you're running a race? They slow you down. In all of our lives here today, there are weights. Some of them, in and of themselves, not sinful. But they become sinful because they distract you from the object of our faith which is Jesus Christ. They keep us from the disciplines of grace, the means of grace God has given to see and savor Jesus more and more. And that's one of the reasons we still struggle even though we have it better. We struggle because we're weighed down in this fight of faith. And beloved, we need to lay aside these weights.

But there's one more reason given that we struggle, and we'll end with this. The other reason that we struggle in the fight of faith to endure to the end, is because we have the wrong object of faith. In v. 2, it says, "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." A huge mistake we all make in the fight of faith in this race that we are all in is looking at others around us. Or maybe being fixated on the examples that were set before us. You are not supposed to look at the saints of old and be locked in on them and then compare yourself to them. They are testimonies of what choosing faith will be in the end. But you're not to stay fixated upon them. But often we read testimonies of old, or we look at brothers and sisters around us, and we say my faith is weak, not like theirs, and we become discouraged. One of the problems is the object of our faith. What other objects do we look at in our faith? Ourselves. Ourselves.

What do you mean by that? Because we are given the onus and the responsibility and the command to endure to the end, to persevere. And we look at ourselves and we try to conjure up enough faith to make it to the end. But see, when you're the one that's conjuring up enough faith as you look within, do you know where your faith is lying then? It's lying in you and your own faith. We are not called to have faith in our faith. There is a different object of faith that the writer of Hebrews is pleading with you here in v. 2 to make the object of your faith. He says, "looking to Jesus." Present active. Continually looking at Jesus Christ. If we're going to persevere to the end, we all must be constantly, continually and pointedly looking at Jesus Christ, and removing anything from our lives that distracts this view right here, or keeps us from it. He has gone before us as a forerunner. He was perfect in faith. It says for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. He's the perfect example and object of faith. One greater than Moses has come. One greater than Abraham has come. Do not fix your gaze upon Abraham. Upon Moses. Upon David. Or upon saints around you, or upon yourself. Fix your gaze upon Jesus Christ, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Jesus has secured all the promises the Father has made through His Word to His chosen people. Through His life, death, burial, and resurrection.

Let me exhort us here. How is faith developed? How does it grow? By becoming more and more preoccupied with the object of our faith. The more preoccupied you are with the object

of our faith Jesus Christ, then the capacity to trust Him in greater situations will grow as well. He must remain preeminent in all things. Preachers, can I exhort you in this? He must be preeminent in all of your preaching. No matter where you're preaching from, I'm not saying that every verse is saying the name of Jesus, but I am saying this entire book has one message. God's redemptive plan for His people through Jesus Christ. And every story in this book points in some way to Jesus Christ. And that's why all of our preaching; that's why that exhortation of Hebrews 10 out on the door that as long as it's called 'today,' exhort one another. You know what we need to be exhorting one another in? In Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. As we grow deeper and deeper in the revelation of Jesus, our capacity to trust Him grows as well. Meaning what? In our moment-by-moment fight of faith, looking to Jesus, look at His perfected faith as our forerunner; look at His finished work. Look at His promises secured and His atoning death. And believe in His return will be the consummation of all that He's already secured for us.

Lastly, looking to Christ does not, listen to me, getting your eyes off of yourself, and looking to Jesus Christ does not remove your responsibility to endure to the end - it enables it. It enables you to endure to the end. If you are not looking to Christ, you will not endure to the end. Our faith needs to be centered on one thing: Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I'm going to pray now. I'm going to pray according to Ephesians 1 - The prayer that Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus which is pointing us to the same thing. And I want you to carefully listen to the words of Paul that I ask for for us as well.

Let's pray. God, in the name of Jesus, I pray for each of us here, myself included, Lord. God, we want to endure. And we must endure. And we need Your grace and help to see and savor Jesus Christ above every earthly treasure. So I pray along with Paul, God, that God, You would grant to us the Spirit of revelation in wisdom in the knowledge of Christ having the eyes of our hearts enlightened, that we may know what is the hope to which You have called us, what are the riches of Your glorious inheritance, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power towards us who believe. God, would You help us here? Show us Christ, more and more, deeper and deeper. Let Him be the object of our faith. And grant us the grace needed, Lord, to endure to the end for Your glory and our good. In the name of Christ, Amen.