

The Hebrews Initiative:
Where Do You Find Faith?
Hebrews 10:32-12:3

November 8, 2015

Dr. Steve Horn

Text Introduction: We are in a series that we are calling the Hebrews Initiative. It is an important journey. Originally written to a group of fairly new believers in Jesus who were experiencing difficulty in a difficult world, this anonymous writer is calling them to a life of endurance. He has used language like “not shrinking back from faith” and “hold fast to the confession” to encourage them to persevere in their Christian calling and walk with Jesus. He would say, “This is not the time to back up; instead, this is the time to press forward.”

His call to endurance hinges upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. The writer’s description of what Christ has done for us has been steeped in the rich heritage of the Old Testament or Old Covenant. He has compared Jesus to the angels, Moses, Joshua, the law, the Levitical priesthood, the sacrifices that the priests of the Old Testament system made, and now the covenant.

When we come to chapter 11, many would say that this is where his message reaches its crescendo. Indeed this chapter has inspired many through the ages.

Let us hear the word of the Lord again today. Let’s begin with reading Hebrews 11:1-6.

Text: 1 Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.² For our ancestors won God’s approval by it.

³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by God’s command, so that what is seen has been made from things that are not visible.

⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith.

⁵ By faith Enoch was taken away so he did not experience death, and he was not to be found because God took him away. For prior to his removal he was approved, since he had pleased God. ⁶ Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him.

Introduction: In Luke 18, we have the record of a parable that Jesus told. Usually, we refer to the parable as the parable of the persistent widow. The parable has to do with faith. It is a parable that is easy to misunderstand because in the parable there is a widow who keeps going to a judge, who by the way did not respect man or fear God, demanding justice from her adversary. At first the judge did nothing, but because of the persistence of the widow’s coming finally granted her justice and a decision. The reason that we could misunderstand that parable is that it could lead to an interpretation that God answers prayer on the basis of our persistence. However, Jesus answered that issue in giving the reason Himself for the parable. Jesus said, “Will not God grant justice?” But then Jesus said, “When the Son of Man comes will He find faith on the earth?”

I tell you that story because I think it fits the context of what we have been studying in Hebrews. We can only talk about faith for so long. Sooner or later, we have to have faith. We have to act on our faith.

Remember the context of Hebrews. It is one of persecution, the possibility of drifting, and a plea not to draw back from their faith in God.

Where will they find faith to persevere? Better yet, to apply this to us, “Where do we find faith?”

In your History (Hebrews 10:32-39)

³² Remember the earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. ³³ Sometimes you were publicly exposed to taunts and afflictions, and at other times you were companions of those who were treated that way. ³⁴ For you sympathized with the prisoners and accepted with joy the confiscation of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves have a better and enduring possession. ³⁵ So don't throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you need endurance, so that after you have done God's will, you may receive what was promised.

³⁷ For yet in a very little while,
the Coming One will come and not delay.

³⁸ But My righteous one will live by faith;
and if he draws back,
I have no pleasure in him.

³⁹ But we are not those who draw back and are destroyed, but those who have faith and obtain life.

That's the first point of the encouragement in the Hebrews text. The writer said, “Don't throw away your confidence.” As Christians, the resurrection reminds us not to throw away the confidence that we have in Jesus.

But there is more. In this text we are encouraged to be our own witness as to why we need to keep our confidence. The irony of the Hebrews' situation is that though they have been challenged throughout to persevere, their own lives are a great testimony of perseverance.

Hasn't God strengthened you in difficult times? Haven't you faced uncertain, overwhelming times before, but been delivered? That same God who delivered you then will deliver you again.

Frances Ridley Havergal lived from 1836-1879. She was a hymn writer. She wrote the hymn, *Take My Life and Let it Be*, for example. She endured frequent illness throughout her life. She remembered her mother telling her as a small child, “Frannie, dear, pray to God to prepare you for all that He is preparing for you.” This is God's promise to us. We might face some giants, but He has prepared us for the giants.

Some of you find yourself in a rough patch this morning. You are wondering if you are going to make it out this time. Your own history might be the best evidence that God is able.

In your Heroes (Hebrews 11:1-40)

But sometimes, our faith grows weak, and we need a little boost. That is why we get a list of heroes of the faith.

In this list we get some “Conclusions of Faith.”

1. God does exist so much so that Enoch fellowshiped with Him.
2. God keeps His Word. (Noah)
3. God can be trusted. (Abraham)
4. God is in control. (Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph)
5. God is enough. (Moses)
6. God is able. (Israel)
7. God is consistent. (Various stories)

And so, the character of faith is one of conviction and assurance. (Hebrews 11:1)

In Him (Jesus) (Hebrews 12:1-3)

12 Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, ²keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God’s throne.

³For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, so that you won’t grow weary and lose heart.

Jesus is the real example of faith.

Before you think how difficult you have it, maybe you should consider what Jesus went through so that we could have access to God and have access to Heaven. He, though Himself without sin, took the sin of the entire world and died for that sin. And, the text says, He did so **with joy**. There are lots of examples of faith, even a great cloud of witnesses as described in Hebrews 11, but Jesus is the greatest example of faith.

Jesus empowers our faith.

Not only is Jesus the example of faith, but He is the one who empowers our own faith. He empowers us, or as the text reads, is the finisher of our faith.

Will you trust Him?

Does it make sense to trust Him for eternal life and not life?

You can trust Him. You are your own testimony. The stories of the Bible and the stories of His faithfulness in the lives of others you know testify to the fact that you can trust Him. The fact that He left the glory of Heaven for a season, took on humanity, took our sin, went to the cross, and rose again in order to promise us forgiveness of sin and eternal life ultimately testify that we can trust Him.

Horatio Lord Nelson lived from 1758-1805. The son of a clergyman, he joined the British Royal Navy when he was 12 years old. He became a Captain when he was 20. He was heralded as a daring leader who won many a victory for the British. One of his greatest victories was over the French during the Napoleonic Wars. Napoleon planned to invade Egypt so to restrict Britain's trade routes. On August 1, 1798, Nelson came upon the French Navy in the waters near Alexandria, Egypt, in what would later be referred to as the Battle of the Nile. Upon spotting the French warships, one of Nelson's men said, "If we succeed, what will the world say?" Nelson immediately responded, "There is no if in the case. That we shall succeed is certain!"

As believers in Jesus Christ—that we will succeed is certain! There is no "if." But, we live like there is an "if." We act like there is an "if. Faith says "There is no if."

When Admiral Horatio Nelson knew that the Battle of the Nile was won, and he saw what an overwhelming victory it was, he sent word to his superiors that "Victory is not strong enough a name to describe the scene."

That is going to be us one day. Let's live like it now.