

What It Looks Like to Live By Faith

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everybody. It's already been an amazing morning, actually. I am so filled that I could, if we could just stop right here and go home, but then you guys are going to miss out on an amazing sermon. I just don't want to do that to you, you know. Those of you who are catching this online, man, thanks for queuing in, listening. Miss you guys. Look forward to having you back.

So I've been away. Those of you who may have noticed, I appreciate that. Those of you who didn't, whatever. But I've been out for the last two weeks. One was to preach down at our One Harbor Beaufort location, and man, God is doing some amazing things down there. And me and my family were on vacation out in Washington State, and got to actually sit in on a church service at another church. And I just have to say, it's amazing the two experiences. It doesn't matter where you go.

You walk into a church, and you're not in a foreign land. You feel right at home. And so, man, there's something special about that. Not only experiencing that, but getting to see how God is active and moving and doing great things in different parts of our nation, which is awesome.

And it shows and it reminds us that he's doing this all over the world. So, but this is home for me. And coming back is like, yes, I love being back here. And you guys are the main reason for that. So there was no other place I'd rather be on a regular basis than worshipping here with you guys at One Harbor Church. So enough of that mushy stuff. All right. It's been an emotional enough morning. We'll get to it. And we're going to be in Hebrews 11. And if you have your Bible, you can go ahead and start making your way there. If you don't, we have verses up on the screens. Okay. And let me just say by intro, Hebrews 11 is one of those chapters, man, it would be good to just mark it and revisit it every once in a while. When your faith is like slumping and you're feeling discouraged, jump in and read that passage. It is great. I was actually listening in my lounge. I'm married to a South African, so that means living room. And you know, this is Haley's influence on me, but I was in my lounge listening to Alan's sermon on the first part of Hebrews 11 Wednesday morning and was just loving it. So encouraged, so built up. And so hopefully that continues this morning as well. And so this, as we look at it today, it just continues to tell the stories of these faithful men and women who lived by faith. So starting in verse 17, it says this, by faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac and he had received the promises. And he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son of whom it was said through Isaac, shall your offspring be named.

He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead from which figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. By faith, Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. By faith, Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

[3 : 02] By faith, Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. 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 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. By faith, he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured 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, 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 and 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 the 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. This preacher is starting to get like Pentecostal right now. This is probably when its voice is elevating and people are going, yeah, yeah, you know. Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains in 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. These are God's words. So a few weeks ago, I had the privilege of sitting and listening to an old seasoned saint just share story after story after story of his life of following Jesus. He's been a pastor for over 40 years, one of our heroes personally to me and Haley, and just hearing him talk about how Jesus came through in so many different ways, some of them in major ways, and some of them just in seemingly significant ways, and yet always trusting in God to come through. Some of those stories were about his son getting soccer cleats that they couldn't afford. Others were getting the exact amount of money to fix a car that had broken down. It was the only car they had at the time. Others, God providing housing for them as they stepped into new nations that

God had called them to, and they didn't know where they were going to land, and cars, and on and on and on it goes. And then you read biographies of guys like George Mueller, who stepped out in faith and did amazing things and trusted in God, and it's seeming in those most dire moments where they needed God to come through, God came through time and time and time again. And what strikes me, though, guys, about these people, my friend Tom that I talked about, George Mueller, all these guys in Hebrews 11, is that they actually weren't exceptional. They weren't the smartest bunch. They weren't the strongest bunch. They were ordinary people. All they did is they started saying yes to God.

That is it. And that is what a life of faith looks like. Faith is saying yes to God no matter what. This is the basis of living by faith, saying yes. When God says do this, we respond with, okay, yes.

Now, this isn't to say like, like faith is just going out on a limb and saying like, hey, God, I'm going to make some big, huge risks, and you better back me up. No, that's not faith. That's foolishness. It's not going and saying, I'm going to buy 10 lottery tickets and just pray, and man, God, if you can back me up here, and I can win the lottery, then I'm going to be the most, you know, generous person in the world and bless your kingdom. Or, you know what, I can't really afford that Mercedes Benz, but you know what, by faith, I'm going to go, and I'm going to like over leverage myself in debt and trust that God's going to come through. Now, that's not what he's talking about.

[7 : 48] That is not living by faith. That isn't, that's not saying yes to God. That is expecting God to say yes to you. And life of faith doesn't do that. A life of faith says yes to God, even if he is calling you to do difficult things. See, living by faith doesn't mean we get to test God's faithfulness to us, but it does mean that God will test our faith and our faithfulness to him. And more often than not, it calls, that testing calls us to lose something. Look at verse 17. By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. Isaac, his only son, is the son of the promise. If Isaac died, guess what?

All of God's promises to Abraham would have been not. It would have been done. End of story. And yet, Abraham was willing to offer up his son, but God came through and provided a substitute at the last moment because he was testing Abraham's faith. By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, it says in verse 24, 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. So when we look at the lives of Abraham and Moses or George Mueller or Rob Hollis, who got baptized today, and Rob Wansker, who got baptized today, and Nora and Sierra, we look to them and their yes on the table, their yes to Jesus, just even in that moment of baptism, it puts faith on flesh. It helps us to see what is going on with the life of faith. And it teaches us where a life of faith will take us. And that is this, faith leads us into a life of sacrifice and surrender. That is what living by faith does. See, we all want to see the results of faith, right? We want to see the walls of Jericho come down, parting the Red Sea, healing the sick, raising the dead. Man, when Alan told that story in a sermon last week of like laying his hands on that Guatemalan man and him being healed, I was like, yes, Lord, yes and amen. I want to see that. I want to see that in our area. I want to see that when I lay hands on people and pray for them.

But before Alan saw God's healing power in that moment, he had to say yes, right? He had to say yes to giving up his time and schedule to travel down to Guatemala.

Yes to saving up money and spending that money on flights down there and whatever else that trip cost. Yes to living in a communal bunker during monsoon season. Like that did not sound fun.

And then yes to being a mime for Jesus, right? They were down there and he had to mime these things down there. Now, that might have been the greatest test of all tests. Let's be honest, right? Miming for Jesus down in Guatemala. That's real sacrifice and surrender. See, when you say yes to Jesus, you become generous. You become a giving person, right? What are you giving away?

[10 : 59] You're giving away control. You're giving away comfort. You're giving away convenience. You're giving away security. You're giving away your safety. You're giving away your preference. But you're putting it in God's hands. And faith, what that does, living a life by faith, it provokes generosity toward God in every aspect of our lives. Like Jesus says, like, man, be rich toward God. And we always think money. No, no, no. It's not just about money. It's everything. It's our time. It's our talents. It's our treasures. We're leveraging them. We're being generous with all that we have in giving it to God, which is the heart of worship. That is the essence of living a life of worship, which is faithful. It's not a song that is sung, but a life that is lived in sacrifice and surrender to God by saying yes again and again and again. And that's really, guys, where we encounter the hard part of living by faith, right? The sacrifice and surrender part, that's the hard part.

But that comes before the rewards. And it would be nice if it was the other way around, right? Like, give me the rewards and then I'll be obedient. But without faith, we would never choose that sacrifice and surrender. Because why? The price is too high. The price is just too high. But faith helps us see what awaits us on the other side. Faith gets us to see the reward on the other side of suffering. Now, think about this. You and I, we will endure things if the reward is good enough, right?

I mean, you look in the Bible. Jacob, he worked 14 years to marry his dream girl. I can get my kids to do just about anything for the reward of Dunkin' Donuts or video games, right? You guys get video game time. They're like, okay, yeah, we will do chores. No problem. We were just on vacation in Washington.

Like I said earlier, Washington State. And one day we went on a hike, which is like everybody in Washington hikes. It looks like everybody got dressed up at REI and then came outside. I don't know what's going on there. But during our hike, we came across this huge slug. I mean, these things are like, they're big. They're like this, like, think like a ballpark Frank hot dog, right? Cook.

They're big. Yeah. And I'm like, okay. So Rory, my eight-year-old son, comes up to me and says, hey, Dad, would you eat that for a hundred bucks? I said, no, I would not eat it for a hundred bucks.

[13 : 30] That reward wasn't enough. But if somebody offered me \$20,000, I'd be like, hmm, I'm going to put some salt and pepper on that sucker and start chewing away, right? See, the point is I'm making here, the greater the reward, the more you're willing to suffer for it, right? And that's what it's talking about here. Look at verse 35. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept a release so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, chains, imprisonment. They were stoned. They were sawn in two. They were killed with a sword. They went about in skins of sheeps and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering about in deserts and mountains and in dens and in caves of the earth. We want to rise again to that better life, don't we? We love that part. Yes, rise again to that better life. But you don't get to pull that little phrase out of its context. What's surrounding it? Torture, death, mocking, being stoned, sawn in two. It's not like a Vegas show, like literally being sawn in two. Poorly dressed, impoverished, hungry, sick, homeless, mistreated in every way.

Now, that's not like the fine print of following Jesus. Now, that's not the stuff like God snuck in the, you know, right at the end, like a pharmaceutical commercial, you know? Like, hey, by the way, here's all the side effects of following Jesus. Now, this is, man, God's upfront about this. Jesus was upfront about this. This is foundational to the Christian faith. Jesus promised that we would be hated and suffer because we're on his team. And when you put on his jersey, when you put on, when you become part of team Jesus, you should expect some suffering. You should expect to be a target of that stuff.

Now, while Christians in the other parts of the world experience this kind of targeted persecution, persecution, like you think the Middle East, some Muslim nations, stuff like that, where it's like, man, it's really not safe. You could actually lose your life and your family for being a Christian.

There is that kind of targeted persecution, but let's be honest, us in America, we don't really experience that. But let me say this, guys, there is suffering still that we are called into. And it doesn't cheapen the suffering that we are called into, right? We are called to be generous.

We are called to care for the poor and the weak and the outcast and the marginalized. We're called to engage meaningfully in community with people that are very much not like us. We are called to die to our lusts and our passions and our idols and our dreams. We are called to put God first in everything.

[16 : 17] And all of this calling comes at a cost. And living in surrender and dying to our preferences, it brings a kind of suffering. It's our pride that suffers. It's our greed that suffers. It's our self-righteousness that suffers. And as that takes place, sometimes we will experience this internal struggle and turmoil, right? There's like an internal emotional kind of suffering as our egos get challenged and have to shrink and die. And sometimes that suffering will be external. We will experience that. People will laugh at us. People will unfriend us. People will mock us. Or they will use your suffering to better themselves. It happens. So then what makes it worth it? What makes it worth it to go through any of that and keep saying yes to Jesus? Because beyond the suffering for Jesus is his glory and resurrection life. I mean, that is a sure thing. You don't have to earn that. That is already secured.

And that is the reward of every suffering God calls us into. Paul Miller, he's one of my favorite Christian authors. Like, I couldn't recommend his books highly enough to you. And in his book, *A Loving Life*, he calls this movement of going through suffering into life as the J-curve. And it looks like this. Okay? So you have this, you have life and then God calls you into death. But through death, you come into resurrection, life, and power. And you notice on the other side is that it goes up higher.

And this is what happens when Jesus saves us, right? What we were talking about with baptism today, we go through death. We're united with Jesus in his death and we pass through it into resurrection life. Baptism symbolizes that momentous shift. But after that big baptism, like what we experience today, guess what? We experience daily little baptisms all the time. The rest of our life in Christ is filled with these little baptisms of dying and rising with Jesus as we say yes to him.

This follows Jesus' own pattern of life. He first went down into death and then up into resurrection, right? But notice the J ends higher than it starts, right? After dying to ourselves, after God brings us into the death, maybe it's an idol in our heart. Maybe it's a lie that we've been holding onto. Maybe it's anger towards someone or bitterness towards someone that we have to let go of. Maybe it's control that we have to let go of that God is calling us into. As we die to those things, we pass into resurrection life. And it takes us higher. We're filled with more with Christ and we're elevated in those beautiful places. And so, man, Jesus lived that way. Guess what? As his disciples, we can expect to live that way too. If we expect the Christian life only to be quick and easy victories, we are going to end up being disappointed. And that works itself out in one of two ways. We blame God or we blame ourselves. We blame God believing he isn't living up to his promise. God, I did the thing you told me to do. Why am I suffering here? This isn't fair. Or we blame ourselves believing we didn't live up to be able to earn that promise that we wanted. Either way, what we're doing is we're turning God into something he is not. The first, blaming God, makes God out and assumes he is unfaithful and cruel.

The second, when we blame ourselves, makes God out to be demanding and hard to please. I wasn't obedient enough. I didn't have enough faith to claim that victory.

[20 : 00] But the gospel, again, doesn't promise us life without suffering. And even in those stories, when you consider some of them where the outcome was miraculous, like Gideon. I talked about Gideon, right? Gideon led an army of 300 against over 100,000 Midianites. He won. But before he experienced that victory, he had to pass through the suffering of dying to his preference not to lead, to not confront idolatry and tear down the altars of Baal around him, making him unpopular.

He had to die to the idea of like, man, I need a big army to be able to pull off this victory. He had to send home the bulk of his army as God required. Or consider Moses. He had to die to palace living in Egypt for tent living in a desert with a million people who often hated most of his leadership decisions. But you know what? He saw God part the Red Sea, water flow from a rock, and manna fall from heaven as provision for 40 years. See the pattern? God leads us, leads us through death into resurrection life. This is the Christian life. And that resurrection life isn't about more money, bigger houses, and better family vacations. See, there is a knowing Jesus, and then there is a knowing Jesus. Paul prayed this for the Ephesian church in chapter 3 verse 19. He prays that they would know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. Okay, how do you know something that surpasses knowledge? This is this kind of knowing what he's talking about. It's a relational, it's revelatory, it's intimate knowledge, it's not scientific knowledge.

See, you can know things. You and I can learn things and know things through study and observation, right? We can use the scientific method and learn a lot of stuff. But you know them very differently through uniting with them. You can study fire scientifically. You can learn all about it. You can learn how it can produce power and energy. But when you put your hand in the flame and are touched by it, there's a new knowing you have a fire that you didn't have before. You've united with it. It's touched you. And that's what happens when we pass through death with Christ into his resurrection life. It's unity with Jesus through that gospel-shaped movement. We experience more of his resurrection life as we die daily to ourselves. That's what happens. You and I will experience more of Jesus. You and I will be filled more with the Holy Spirit. You and I will, we will be full. We will have more resurrection life in and flowing through us as we die daily to ourselves. And ultimately, these little gospel movements throughout our life give away to the final gospel movement. We will pass through death into eternity.

And what we know in part now about the grace and the glory and the love and the goodness and the mercy and the peace that we have in Jesus, we know that in part now, but then we will know in full.

Like 1 Corinthians 13 says, then we will see face to face. And that makes it all worth it. All the suffering, all the little J-curve moments in our life, because one day we will see him face to face. As the band comes up, I want us to consider how to respond. If you're not a Christian, this is your day that God is calling you to say yes to Jesus. Salvation is that. Salvation is saying yes to him. Yes to repenting of your sins. Yes to believing in him as your Lord and Savior.

[23 : 54] And I want to invite you, if you want to do that today, if you've never done that before, you want to do that today, man, do that. As we respond, and we're going to take, in a moment, we're going to take some time to respond quietly. And all you have to do is say, man, Jesus, I'm sorry. I'm a sinner, and I need you as Savior. The Bible says you do that and you will be saved. But you know what?

You don't walk this life alone. If you do that, man, after the service, you can talk to myself or Alan, one of the pastors, and let, say, hey guys, I put my faith in Jesus for the first time today. We would love to know that and help you walk through what it looks like to follow Jesus more.

All right, now for the Christians in the room, I want to speak to us. How is the Holy Spirit leading you to respond today? A lot of this passage, a lot of this encouragement, I want to ask us a couple of questions. What is he putting it on your heart to say yes to? What is he putting on your heart to say yes to? What is it? And what things are you going to have to give up, aka die to, in order to live surrender to Jesus. So I want to invite us to reflect on those things. Those will be, those will stay up there so you can't blame it on forgetting what I just said. You can write it down. You can talk about it over lunch. Maybe a community group, share it with someone this week. And I want to give us all a moment right now to just respond, to consider and pray and listen to how the Holy Spirit is leading us.

So I want to ask us right now, let's close our eyes. We're going to take a minute to listen to God and respond to him. Thank you.

Thank you. I want to ask you guys I want to ask you guys I want to ask you guys I want to ask you guys Thank you.

[26 : 19] Father, thank you for the truth of your word that encourages us, speaks truth into our hearts that we need all the time. Thank you for working throughout history in the lives of men and women.

Thank you for these stories of them just simply saying yes, ordinary, not very exceptional. But your power flowed into their lives.

You did amazing stuff all around them and in and through them because they simply trusted you. They simply chose to say yes, regardless of what the cost was.

Amen. And I pray, Lord, that their truth, the truth of their lives, the testimony of their lives would encourage us to do the same. Amen.

Amen. We're going to continue to respond right now. And we're going to do that with communion. And if you didn't get communion on the way in and you want to take communion, can you just raise your hand?

[27 : 27] And one of our welcome shirt people will help you out and get it to you. So anybody? We're good. Looks like we're good. Yeah. Keep your hand raised. Okay, we need two up here.

One back there. Cool, guys. Don't take communion just yet. We're going to take it all together at the same time. I'm going to lead us in taking communion.

And communion reminds us of that gospel movement. Death into resurrection life. Jesus said yes to the Father.

And the night he was betrayed, he was wrestling in the garden with that very aspect. Am I going to say yes or am I not going to say yes? Lord, can this cup pass from me?

Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done. Jesus said yes. And it brought the greatest victory through his death. But his death also points to resurrection.

[28 : 29] And as we eat this, we're reminded that, man, this is the cup and the bread of his suffering. But it also points us to a feast we're going to eat one day in heaven.

And that is going to be a feast of celebration, of joy, of victory forever and ever and ever. And so we get to be reminded both the past and our future as we take this today.

And so Jesus, on the night that he was betrayed, he said, this is my body broken for you. Take this in remembrance of me. Let's eat together. And then he took the cup and he gave it to his disciples and he said, hey, this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the covenant.

The new relationship I'm making with you. Take and drink this. The blood that points to the forgiveness of our sins. Take and drink this in remembrance of him.