

Hebrews 11: 17-40

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[0 : 00] Hebrews chapter 11, we'll be finishing up Hebrews chapter 11 this morning as we start in verse 17 and go to the end of the chapter. As we've been making our way the last couple of weeks, or this makes week three, through this heroes of the faith chapter in Hebrews 11, we always want to take it in its proper context, and we see the context there is found at the end of Hebrews chapter 10 where it says, but we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

And so the author of Hebrews here is taking an entire chapter and devoting it to the description of what that type of faith looks like, the faith to the preserving of the soul.

So each time we read this and each time we come together, we need to understand that we are not just getting great examples throughout history for us to stand all and go, oh, that was awesome, look at that.

Man, I can't believe what those guys did. Those guys were great. That's not what the author is intending to do. The author is raising up normal men and women and putting on display for us what faith that preserves the soul looks like being lived out in the life of normal individuals.

And I hope that we never lose sight of that, that when we open up scripture with the exception of the person of Jesus Christ, with the exception of that one individual, every other person we run into is just like you and I.

[1 : 34] The Bible tells us that Elijah was a man like us. So as we, and I caution us that because as we open up Hebrews 11 and we finish it up this morning, and I know I kind of just jumped right into it, and I don't apologize for that, but as we finish it up this morning, I want us to understand we're reading the testimony of normal people with an abnormal faith and a supernatural God.

And they're just really living this out for His glory and for their benefit. So if you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm asking if you would join with me as we stand together and we read Hebrews chapter 11 starting in verse 17 and we go down to verse 40 which finishes up the chapter and then we will pray.

The author says, By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son. It was he to whom it was said, In Isaac your descendants shall be called.

He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead from which he also received him back as a type. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau even regarding things to come.

By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshipped leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel and gave orders concerning his bones.

[3 : 02] By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw he was a beautiful child 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 endure ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.

Considering the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is unseen.

By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkling of the blood so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land and the Egyptians, when they had tented it, were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

Verse 32, And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel, and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

[4 : 23] Women received back their dead by resurrection, and others were tortured, not accepting their release so that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, men of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

And all these, look at verse 39, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us, they would not be made perfect.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day, and God, we thank you for your word. Lord, as we have read your word, we pray now that we would see it with clarity and truth.

Lord, we pray that by the power and presence of the Spirit, that we would come to an understanding of it, which radically transforms and changes our life. Lord, that it would draw us closer to you, that it would move us closer to one another, and that you would be glorified and exalted through our obedience to it.

[5 : 41] And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. We are looking at Hebrews chapter 11, verses 17 through 40, and I want you to see this morning, as we have read the text, the approval gaining faith.

What it looks like to have approval gaining faith. Because as the author testifies, not just to the listing of individuals, which we have from 17 to 40, but really the listing of individuals in all of Hebrews chapter 11, starting in verse 1.

All these have gained approval through their faith. All these have gained approval through their faith. We notice that they did not gain approval through their obedience, even though what we see is each individual walking in obedience.

We also notice that they did not gain approval through their works or their efforts, though we could testify that there are a great amount of works and even great works being performed by these normal individuals.

Rather, the approval that they gained was the approval by their faith. And that is good news for you and I. Because we may not ever do the works which these individuals were called to do by the power of God working in them, but we are called to live by the same soul-preserving faith in which they lived.

[6 : 56] And the approval that men and women seek to gain through Christ is not an approval of effort or approval of works, but rather is an approval gained by faith. So I want you to see what it looks like to have approval-gaining faith.

And we see it in four measures here in Hebrews chapter 11, starting in verse 17. Number one, we see that approval-gaining faith is radical in devotion.

It is radical in devotion. Look at what it says. By faith, Abraham. Now, we've already been introduced to Abraham after he left the land of his fathers, after Abraham believed the promise of God, that he went out to a land which he knew not.

So he took action based upon the calling of God. But here we begin to see his radical devotion. Because after he begins to see the fulfillment of the promises of God, he understands this is the land.

This is the land I'm going to give you. And all of a sudden, even after he took matters into his own hand, and they had Ishmael, later on God comes and revisits him again, and he has the promises of Isaac.

[7 : 58] And now he has this only begotten son, Isaac. Not only begotten, meaning only birthed son through him, but the only begotten, that special called son, Isaac.

And we see this great call which God puts upon his life. By faith, Abraham, when he was tested. Let's just stop right there and go ahead and say, it's okay if the Lord God Almighty puts our faith to

the test.

We need to just acknowledge that. And we don't need to say that it's unfair. We don't need to say that it's unbiblical. We need to say that it's absolutely okay. Because it says, when he was tested, offered up his son Isaac.

It says, by faith when he was tested, offered up Isaac. And he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son. Now look at the radical devotion of Abraham. Abraham was getting ready to lay on the altar the very son that God had promised him, but also the very way that God was going to work in him.

Everything that God had promised Abraham was tied up in this one individual, his son Isaac. And I love when we go to the book of Genesis and we read this account and we see the faith that Abraham exhibits here.

[9 : 14] We understand that when he goes to the base of this mountain, in the mount of the Lord, it will be provided. By the way, that's Temple Mount, which we find all the way over in the book of New Testament. It ended a beautiful picture.

But we see this. I'm just totally getting sidetracked by the Genesis account. But when we see Abraham and his servants are there and they stop at the base of the mountain and they get ready to go up and Abraham turns to his servants and he says, you wait here for my son and I are going to go up on top of the mountain and worship and we will return.

That's faith, right? He said, we will return. Now Abraham was the only one who knew what he was going to do up there. But his faith said, we will return. And then when they get there on their way up, Isaac says, Father, I see the wood.

Father, I see the fire. But where is the sacrifice? Abraham, in his mind, knew what God had called him to do. Abraham, in his mind, knew that God had commanded that Isaac would be his sacrifice. And what was Abraham's answer? The Lord will provide the sacrifice, right? By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, obeyed. And friend, that is a radical devotion because he was literally laying on the altar everything God had given him.

[10 : 24] And he was laying it on the altar. He bound it, tied it up, laid it on the altar, stretched his hands up to the heavens, and he got to that point of no return until the angel said, stop.

Stop. It was radical in its devotion because it says that Abraham believed that God could raise him from the dead.

Abraham said, if this is the child of promise, and if everything God has called to come through me will come through this child, and if God says he's going to do it through this child, though I kill him, God will raise him.

Because it says, when he considered, he looked, if this is God's calling, though I don't understand it, this is God's calling, though I cannot comprehend it, I must believe that God is going to do something greater than even I can imagine.

And it says that he received him back as a type. And then, we begin to see the radical devotion flowing through. It says, by faith, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau regarding things to come.

[11 : 36] Now, we know the biblical account, and we don't have time to go through all the Old Testament history, but you know that when Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, that Jacob gained the blessing because Isaac wanted to bless Esau.

Remember that? Isaac loved Esau. He loved the way he cooked. He loved the way he hunted. He loved the food he provided. Isaac wanted to bless Esau. Esau was the firstborn, but that subplanter, Jacob, received that blessing instead through tricking his father through putting the goat skin on.

Remember? Jacob's mother loved him better. And we say, well, this deceiving, conniving little trickster. But the Bible says that it is by faith that Isaac blessed Jacob because God had a plan.

Look, God even overrules our conniving and scheming. I believe in a God bigger than the works and acts of man. I believe in a God that is mightier than the trickery of men, right?

And I believe that when Isaac blessed Jacob, that was well within the ordained counsel and plans and purposes of God, even though from the world's perspective it looked like Jacob was taking something that didn't belong to him, God caused it all to work together for good.

[12 : 43] And it is by faith that Jacob is blessed. And then it says, and by faith, Jacob blesses the sons of his, blesses his grandsons because it says, by faith, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau regarding things to come.

By faith, Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped leaning on the top of his staff. Remember that, he crossed his hands, right? And then Jacob does the very same thing that his father done.

He blesses the younger to rule over the older. Again, God's plans and purposes here. Now, we're looking at radical devotion because Isaac is blessing Jacob regarding things to come.

Jacob is blessing the sons of Joseph while leaning up on the top of his staff or some translations could say leaning at the end of his bed. Really doesn't matter. It was in his dying days, but he's also in the land of Egypt when this is happening.

But he is blessing them as it relates to the promise, you know, numerically, is over 400 years away. And he's looking ahead. And then it says, and by faith, Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel and gave orders concerning his bones.

[13:51] Now, you remember when they leave, they take Joseph's bones with them because by faith, Joseph said, though I may be second in command in this land, this is not the land God has promised.

When God takes you out of this land, when all of its comforts and all of its provisions, because in the time of Joseph, it was an easy land to live in. They were in the land that was fertile for pasture land. They were not yet slaves.

When God takes you out, be sure to take my bones. What we see is this radical devotion to the things that God had promised them, though they could not see them yet.

The first thing we understand about approval gaining faith, it is a faith that is radical in its devotion. They were completely devoted to what God had promised and each of them, it says, were looking forward to things to come.

Number two, approval gaining faith is not only radical in devotion, it is rebellious in direction. Now, let's just stop right there. It's okay to rebel against some things.

[14:55] I don't mean rebellious in the fact that, you know, it's just completely law-breaking, non-law-abiding. I'm not talking about that. I want you to pay attention. It is rebellious in its direction.

By faith, Moses. You ever wonder why Moses has such great faith? We read the rest of this verse and we see. By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents. See, the faith that was imparted to Moses was the faith of his parents because they decided to rebel against the direction of the rest of society that by his parents they hid him because they saw he was a beautiful child and they were not afraid of the king's attic.

You remember the king's attic at that time because there arose another king who knew not Joseph, right? The king's attic was we're going to slay all these male children and anytime there's a male child born, we're going to throw it in the Nile River and we're going to get rid of all the male children and by faith, the Bible tells us, by faith, Moses' parents hid him because they were not afraid of the king's attic.

They rebelled against an unlawful ruling. They rebelled against an unbiblical thing but it is the faith that they are holding and they hide him for three months and then they put him in that basket by faith and it says, by faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

Why? Because he'd seen the faith of his parents. By faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Now listen to this. Choosing rather, just in case we ever attempt to interpret the Old Testament text as if Moses did something unknowingly or Moses didn't know exactly what he was getting into, we see here that the reason Moses defended the Israelite, the reason Moses slew the Egyptian and ended up fleeing into the wilderness for 40 years is because Moses had made a choice and the author of the book of Hebrews tells us what that choice was.

[16:54] Choosing rather to endure ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ's greater riches than the treasures of Egypt for he was looking to the reward.

Here is the rebellious direction of the faith of Moses. Moses was faced with a choice. I can be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and enjoy the riches of Egypt and the pleasures of sin.

Or, I could choose rather to identify with my people and therefore be reproached, be hated, and be treated as a slave. I could either choose comfort, ease, and prosperity, or I could choose the insecurity that comes from being named among the slaves.

I could choose an easy path or I could choose the difficult path. And what Moses did is Moses rebelled against the human nature of mankind to look out for oneself.

Moses was not self-centered and self-concerned that he said, I've got it easy here. Why worry about the people over there? I have the passing pleasure of sin, as it refers to.

[17 : 56] I could sit in the course of Egypt and I could be enriched through the Egyptian government. But rather, he would go over and be named with his people. And it says, he did this because he considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

The sad reality is, is that today, many people think that the riches of this world are greater than the riches of being numbered with Christ. The Bible tells us that the reproach of Christ, or that is, the animosity or the hatred or the dislike which people have geared towards us because of Christ, is greater than the riches this world could ever offer us.

That is, to suffer for Christ is a greater treasure than anything this world could ever offer. And Moses believed that.

But friend, let me tell you something, that is a rebellious direction because this world will tell us that to suffer for anything is really foolishness.

But Moses chose rather to be identified with Christ than to be identified with the passing pleasure of sin. It says that by faith he left Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king for he endured as seeing him who is unseen.

[19 : 12] The king says, stay, he said, I'm going. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. Faith, that is approval gaining. Faith is rebellious in direction and simply means that it does not go the way the world goes.

It says, the calling of Christ is greater even than the promises of this life and the calling of Jesus Christ and even the suffering of Christ is far greater than anything this world could ever offer me and that is just rebellious.

That just doesn't make sense. It doesn't add up in the world's economy but we see that he did that. Number three, we see that approval gaining faith is realistic in its dependency.

It is realistic in its dependency. One thing that we find out through this Heroes of the Faith chapter is that each one of them, sure, they did great deeds but they were greatly dependent just as we saw last week when we were together.

Just because someone has faith it does not mean that they don't acknowledge their own weakness because one of the grand things of faith is that faith causes us to acknowledge our own shortcomings and our own weaknesses and we see here that this approval gaining faith is realistic in its dependency.

[20 : 28] Think about this just for a minute. By faith Moses kept the Passover. Okay, think about this. He has just seen the power of God put on display nine times in Egypt.

That tenth plague God says the death angel is going to come and the firstborn son of every individual is going to die. This is the tenth plague, right? And God's call is simple.

Take a lamb of a certain age of a certain quality and slay that lamb and put the blood over the doorpost of the house and then set still. It is faith that says the blood smeared of the lamb will stay the death angel over this house.

And as that cry of death rings out through Egypt Moses and the Israelite people are sitting there by faith trusting in one thing that the blood of the lamb is sufficient to cover them from the death angel moving across the land.

And by faith he kept the Passover because he was not dependent upon his efforts. He was not dependent upon his worthiness.

[21 : 44] He was dependent upon the blood of the lamb. It was realistic in its dependency. If we do not have the blood of the lamb then we will suffer the same consequences as everyone else.

It says by faith they that is the entire nation pass through the Red Sea on dry land. Think about that just for a moment. If you are not dependent on this side you're definitely dependent in the middle of it.

You're walking through the Red Sea where the water is walled up on each side and they're sitting there and they're like okay we trust that God's going to keep it there. We see that it's there but we trust that he's going to keep it there because the Egyptians trusted the same thing but it says that they could not do it because they drowned in the water.

They were dependent it says by faith the walls of Jericho fell down when they encircled it seven times because it doesn't make sense. They were completely dependent. God said walk around it seven times six days walk around it once on the seventh day walk around it seven times on the seventh shout a loud shout blow the trumpets for the Lord has given you the city.

That makes no sense whatsoever right? It makes no sense what that says is God we are going to be dependent upon you. If this is how you say it's going to be done then God this is how we are going to do it.

[22 : 55] We are depending upon you not upon our own might not upon our own strength not upon our ability. No military leader would have ever come up with a plan like that. No military leader would have ever thought that was a good idea.

Think about it for just a moment. Walls were built to fortify but walls were also built to keep people out not only just to keep people out but so that you could sit on top of them and kill them as they tried to get in. And God's calling them to march around that thing for seven days.

Now if I'm Jericho I'm just going to put myself in this position okay maybe I interpose myself too much in history but if I am in Jericho and I know that spies have come to the land because they knew that already and if I know that God had called them to take part of this land which they already did and if I know they had already defeated two other kings on the other side of the Jordan River I'm telling you if I'm in Jericho and I'm a warrior in Jericho then I'm going to sit on top of that wall and as they walk around probably shoot my arrows down.

That's just what I'm going to do if I'm in Jericho. I don't think not only did God do a wonderful thing by causing the walls to fall down God did a wonderful thing because nobody died. He didn't let the first arrow shoot from the wall he didn't let anything it wouldn't have made sense military militaristically right?

it wouldn't make sense to expose yourself not for one days but for seven days and seven times on the last day but by faith they said God we're depending upon you we're not going to make a sound we're just going to walk around we're not even going to wield a weapon we're just going to march around it and show them who we are and we're going to keep going around it each and every day we're going to do the same thing because we're realistic this is how you said do it friend listen to me sometimes God calls you to fight your battle sometimes he tells you to put on the full armor of God and stand and be ready for the battle sometimes he calls you to take the sword of the Lord and slay the enemy with it that's you know theologically correct because the sword of the Lord is what the word of God right it is the word of God that doesn't mean you go out and buy a sword and start swinging that thing around that's not what I'm saying you slay your enemy with the sword of the Lord that is the word of God sometimes God just tells you to walk around but whatever it is he tells you to do you be realistic about your dependency upon his plan it may not make sense but if he's commanded you to do it then it makes all the sense in the world I don't always understand it but I always understand my dependency upon him and it says and by faith by faith after the walls of Jericho fell down look at verse 31 by faith Rahab the harlot here's one of those people that's always defined by her past Rahab the harlot as Tony

[25 : 29] Evans says God just won't leave the sister alone because every time he mentions her name he always brings up her past and that's okay because you need to understand what he delivered her from Rahab the harlot did not die she did not perish along with those who were disobedient after she had welcomed the spies in peace by faith what she did what she welcomed them in by faith they told her to do one thing tie this scarlet cord in your window if it's not tied there then you're going to die if it's tied there you won't die now help me remember this if you can exactly where was Rahab the harlot's house located on the wall right on the wall of the city and exactly what fell down when God's people walked around that city the wall right so every part of the wall fell down but Rahab's house and all she did was tie a scarlet thread in the window by faith she said the only thing they commanded me to do was to tie a string in the window and wait by faith she depended on the promises of God see faith that is approval gaining faith is realistic in its dependency as much as they were dependent upon the scarlet blood across the doorpost as much as they were dependent upon the leading through the red sea as much as they were dependent on the fact that God was going to keep them safe and cause them to raise victorious from marching around the city and as much as Rahab was dependent upon the fact that she was taking the promises of God literal so too are we approval gaining faith is realistic in its dependency fourth and finally and we end the book of Hebrews chapter 11 with this approval gaining faith is reassuring in

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