



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Prelude to the “Hall of Faith”

August 7, 2022

Hebrews 10:39 - 11:3

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³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

¹¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ 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.

(Pastor prays)

You have set your eyes on the most well-known chapter in the book of Hebrews, and we will take at least six Sundays to get through it as the preacher gives us example after example of men and women in the Bible who had their faith in God tested to the extreme. This will be extremely relevant for us as we try to live our lives in a society that seems to be determined to smother our faith—your faith— to death. When it feels like every single day is a test of our faith in the God of the Bible. Some of us have people we love who have seemingly walked away from the faith, and then in faith we just keep begging God to do something. And even that is a test of our faith! And what we must never take our eyes off of is the object of our faith.

That’s what the writer is most concerned with. The *object* of our faith; not the *fact* of faith. We all have faith to one degree or another in something. He is pushing us to the object of our faith.

Christianity is described as the religion of faith, so what do we believe?

We believe in the God of the Bible who is the Holy Creator. He created you in His image. We are believing that we are born having inherited a sinful nature from our parents who got it from their parents who got it all the way back to Adam and Eve. We believe that mankind is born separated from God. We believe that God is also a loving God who gave us Jesus Christ. Jesus, all God and all man, lived perfectly. He died on the cross to take the wrath of God away from us and gives us His righteousness. God raised Him from the dead in a victorious declaration. And anyone who believes, repents and trusts can be saved.

Do you trust God? And if so, how does that trust in the living God influence and dictate how you approach the issues waiting on you tomorrow morning? Loneliness, frustration at work, tension in your marriage, being single or having a wayward child may be breaking your heart. Faith in the right object will infuse your heart with real gospel joy and walk you through every bit of that. Simple faith in the saving power of Jesus and His cross is the soft bed you can sleep on, and we all could use some rest. Now today we are going to back up one verse in chapter 10:39 and come forward and see the joy of having faith in this good and loving God. We are going to see what your faith does when it's in the crucified, resurrected Jesus. And you can join this pantheon of believers who live hard lives and do so by faith.

Faith in Christ is the Ground of Our Joy

But faith is not static, it doesn't stay still. It lives and is breathing and acting. So then my question becomes, what is this faith doing? What is it doing right now? What is happening in your life if you have faith in Christ?

Faith feeds my soul

I say, it feeds MY soul to make it personal like the writer does over and over as he uses the pronoun, WE. This is not just encouragement for somebody out there. This is for us. We are facing the same hard world with the same great God. Let's read verse 39 together and drink up the encouragement we find there. ³⁹ *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of*

those who have faith and preserve their souls. We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed. There is not a thing that Satan and all the demons in Hell can throw at you that can destroy you. 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 says, ⁸ *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;* ⁹ *persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;* Do you know the 23rd Psalm? I know you see it at funerals and on bookmarks but there is a line in the 23rd Psalm that gets overlooked sometimes. It is Psalm 23:5. *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.* When I'm being attacked and slandered and there is a maelstrom of violence and hurt going on around me, you have set me at a feast. When we take The Lord's Supper, we are reminded that our souls feast on Christ; we have nourishment and joy and celebration. Because of that, because of Him, because of the cross, because of the grace, we are of those who have faith and preserve our souls. Our souls are kept and nourished and strengthened because of faith in the grace of God found in Jesus. If you feel like your faith has been beaten up and tested and stretched and torn, He is the bread of life. Jesus said, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me as the scripture has said, from his inmost being will flow a river of living water." Faith feeds my hungry soul. You can spit out that other junk. Come to Christ and be joyfully fed.

Faith makes me stable

When I can't tell right from wrong anymore and we are in a recession and children raised in Christian homes are walking away from Christ and some are not even sure of their gender and our top professionals can't tell me what a woman is - it feels terribly unstable. Then I come here to this first verse. Don't you love it?! Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for. Faith *is*. The word "is" is actually the first letter in the Greek sentence. It lives, it's real. It's a present reality. It's not just a virtue, it's a living thing, a way of life. It is Christ, the living, crucified reigning Lord Jesus. Keep looking at the verse. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for - and that's substance. That's ground, foundation, essence. Faith is the foundation, but of what? Things hoped for. I

can thrive today because my trust is in Christ who provides for the future. I can go to my heavenly Father in the name of Jesus and ask Him to save people and do so hopefully. This is not speaking something into existence or manifesting or karma. This is a stabilizing trust in the one who loved me and died for me. This is building your house on the rock and not the sinking sand. This is Job saying “the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. Even though he slay me yet I will praise Him.” This is true Christianity. The faith once and for all delivered to the Saints. This is what it means to have Jesus as Lord. This is what it means to trust the crucified, resurrected Jesus and to build your life on that stable rock that is Christ. Faith feeds my soul. Faith makes me stable.

Faith moves me forward

Let's read the whole verse and this time let's take the back end of the verse.

11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, it is the conviction of things not seen. Faith is convinced that the truth of God's word and the power of His promises are real. This is more than just being settled on the foundation that is Christ. This conviction moves us forward. It's one thing to have your place in Christ settled, you certainly need that. Now this phrase takes us one step forward into seeing how our faith moves our lives. It is trusting that God is good and that Jesus saves sinners. It is having obedience that honors God and being called to live as a Christian. It is acts of kindness that are not random but are intentional. It is something like volunteering at the Clothes Closet on your only day off. It is having conviction that I am to help. It is how I live each moment and how I interpret the world and my place in it. What are you doing here? Why do you exist?

Here's where we need a catechism. What is the chief end or purpose of man? Man's primary purpose is to glorify God, enjoying Him forever. What if those two phrases become the driveway of your life for the next seven days. Glorify God and enjoy Him. What needs to change about your life and behavior and

outlook and attitude and actions? What part of your life right now is not glorifying God? Is it in your marriage or being single? Is it words that come out of your mouth or attitude or adultery? Is it your browser searches or your spiritual laziness or your effort for the gospel? What if right this second you asked God to get rid of everything that does not honor Him? What would happen? Faith is being convinced that my life exists to glorify God and I'm willing to take drastic action. Jesus said "if your right eye causes you to sin, cut it out and throw it away. And if your right hand causes you to sin, then cut it off and throw it away!" Faith gives me courage to make the changes and accept the results that are necessary in order for my life to glorify my gracious unseen Redeemer. Faith feeds my soul. Faith makes me stable. Faith moves me forward.

Faith pleases God

By faith people of old, people mentioned in this chapter, by faith the people of old received their commendations. Their good testimony. Let's slow down a bit and think about what it means to have faith and trust. That is trusting in the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross and His righteousness. The Old Testament saints were saved like you, and I are saved. They looked forward in a glass dimly to Christ. We look back having never seen Him. That is trust. Faith is not simply one way to please God, it is the only way. Faith wins God's approval. John Owen the great Puritan answers the question, how do you know if your faith is pleasing to God? It is trusting Christ alone for salvation. Do you run to the cross of Christ in terrible life experiences? Do you rejoice more in Christ than you worry about the state of the world? Do you rest on the righteousness of Jesus for your "good enoughs"? Are you resolute about the future because Jesus is Lord? Are you willing to be hated by the world in order to be approved by God? Are you getting commendation or condemnation? We all get one or the other. Let me give you one last thing that faith is.

Faith is my moral compass

Let's look back to Genesis 1, to the creation. To the creation out of nothing. Faith is rooted in God speaking the universe into existence. It's rooted in the creation ordinances and the creation of mankind, male and female, so that my morality is not subjective but objective. God spoke and it happened. You can do a lot with this. Jesus spoke and Lazarus came out of the grave. But for our purposes, the Christian life is rooted in the crucified, resurrected Jesus and has a morality that goes all the way back to creation. Our faith is good by those creation ordinances. It's good for all people. It gives humans dignity, it gives humans sexuality, male and female. It gives us the sanctity of life that makes us against abortion. It gives us dependence on God and goodness of work. It is the rejection and hatred of evil. It is the active sovereignty of God. And Genesis 2 shows us the foulness of man and the need for a savior. Faith in Christ is the ground of our joy! Today if you hear His voice do not harden your heart. Faith in Christ: it's the grounds for our joy.

(Pastor prays)