



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Sustaining Faith

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Hebrews 11:7-11

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⁷By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By 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 of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

(Pastor prays)

On Sunday at Hickory Grove we gather. We gather to worship. But what do we do on Saturday? On Saturday we live by faith. Yesterday, members of Hickory Grove were all over the Charlotte area living by faith. Some got together to be trained for foster care parenting and some helped college students move into the dorms at UNCC. Several sang at a wedding, and some planned a loved one's funeral. Several families dropped a kid off at college or spent time caring for aging parents. One spent time with a son teaching manhood and others worried and prayed for better days. Some just rested from a difficult week and enjoyed some time with their family. I would suggest all of this has been done by faith. It's what Christians do. We live our lives minute by minute as people of faith. But not just any faith, a faith in the one who died in our place. It's a faith that Christ has redeemed us, the Father loves

us and the spirit carries us through. living by faith, that's what Chapter 11 of Hebrews is about as the preacher coaches his people to be strong, to hold on and to rejoice in the everlasting love of God. That's what I want to do today. I want to take this passage and fill your heart with confidence not in your ability but in the overwhelming love and grace of God. I want you to see the pure sustaining affection that God has for His adopted children. And to do that, the preacher in Hebrews singles out two or three people of faith: Noah, Abraham, and Sarah. He holds them up as examples of grace and faith in an effort to remind us of how powerful faith in Christ is. You have been given joyful sustaining power. I want to remind you today that by God's grace you're going to make it.

Faith in Christ Will See You Through

Let's take a look at these two and learn. Let's start with Noah.

Faith believes God

Let's read verse 7 and do something with it. *⁷By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*

Think about the context that Noah lived in. Why did God send the flood? Why did God tell Noah to build the ark? The answer is in Genesis 6:5. *The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* And God told Noah to build an ark to save himself and his family. And the writer of Hebrews takes that story and teaches us about faith! Faith accepts God's word. No one was warned by God's concerning events as yet unseen. All Noah had to go on was what God said. And by faith Noah believed it. He lived in a world that had manifestly rejected God and had rebelled and yet he believed.

Do you know about the rainbow? The rainbow is God's reminder of the covenant that says He will never destroy the earth with a worldwide flood

again. There is a reminder but this morning it started to thunder and lightning about 4 o'clock, and if I didn't know about the promise from God that there would not be another worldwide flood, knowing what I know about this society we live in, every time I heard a thunderclap, I would be afraid that the wrath of God was about to wipe us all out. My little beagle was afraid of that. I'll be glad when Connie gets home to take care of that little dog.

What does faith do? Faith accepts God's word. We believe what God says in a world that has manifestly rejected God. Noah believed and did what God told him to do. Isn't that where we are? Isn't that the society we live in? Is that who you are? Are you someone who believes in God, not just a god but our *Christian* God of the Bible. You believe in the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible. Do you know what this word says about rebellion, about sin, about humanity, about our need, and about what the Bible says about the world and mankind? Do you believe that man is not essentially good? That's what the 19th and 20th Centuries told us: that man is essentially good and if he will just work hard enough, get educated, that he will actually continue to evolve into something that is good.

We find that is not going to happen. The Bible says that we are born essentially with a sinful nature, separated from God and in need of a savior. God, in His grace gives us Jesus. Do you believe what the Bible says about Jesus? Do you believe what the Bible says about His love, about God's love and His affection and genuine forgiveness? He is calling to you as a sinner to come and repent and believe what Jesus has done. You see, faith actually accepts God word.

I'll give something else to notice in verse 7.

Faith lives for God's glory

Take another look at verse 7 and especially near the end. By this he condemned the world. That doesn't mean he stood on the corner and told everybody they were going to Hell. How did he condemn the world? He condemned the world by his own example. He condemned the world by his

faith in God's warning. He condemned the world by his trusting God's justice. He condemned the world by his unwavering obedience to the word of God and by his lifetime of faithfulness in the face of a world going the opposite direction. Noah stood alone in the middle of a hostile world and apart from his family there's no evidence that he had any support.

This is one of the gifts the church has: giving support to other brothers and sisters as we joyfully live our lives to the glory of God! In regard to this passage, our job is not to condemn. The world stands condemned already according to John 3:18. *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.* A. W. Pink said, "We cannot convert the wicked, yet we must be careful to set before them such an example of personal piety that they are left without excuse and will come to faith in Jesus, the Redeemer who died to save sinners." And I'll just add one more thing about Noah. Noah's life was a visible challenge to the society around him and because of that the society around him faced a choice that led to their own condemnation. They were rejecting the divine warning by their own belief. Where faith is resisted or rejected, it always leads to condemnation. But Noah received grace as an heir. Faith believes God. That's what I'm asking you to do, believe God.

Faith obeys God

I might would add to that. Faith obeys God regardless. Verse 8 tells the remarkable story found in Genesis 12:1-3. *Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* So verse 8 says, ⁸ *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.* God tells Abraham to "go

from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you." He had to leave his home. He had to leave a place where he was comfortable, where he knew things were. He knew all the cut-throughs and the culture there. He had to leave his family, parents, and go to a land he didn't understand. It would be sort of like a mini funeral. He had to leave friends who accept you and know your sense of humor and your idiosyncrasies and are still your friends. It's hard to leave that. Obedience oftentimes is going to be personal and immediate and costly. This unseeing, almost blind obedience in Abraham's life as he walked into the future with no real confidence about what is actually waiting over the next hill. He didn't know what he would face or how he would make it. All he knew was that God was there and God is good.

And I wonder if that's going to be enough for you? Because for some of you right now, you dread the future as you think about all the possible outcomes. It's enough to cause some significant anxiety. There are lots of those little lessons to learn from Abraham's life, but the big lesson is about obeying God as you walk into the future knowing that God is there, and God is good. How could we categorize this obedience?

I mean personal obedience. That's when you know the right, hard thing to do and you do that. It's personal obedience. It's when you are going through a hard day and you go through it without complaining but you receive it with joy knowing that God is doing something. It's personal obedience.

It should be immediate obedience. It's that once you know what the right thing is, you don't have to deliberate over it. It means doing the right thing even if it's hard. I mean spontaneous obedience. So that you are living your life to the degree that you are trying to follow Christ and you have developed muscle memory in your obedience.

For some of you that is going to mean daring obedience. What I mean by that is that I hope more and more God is going to call some of you into full-time

ministry. There are men and women here who need to surrender to the ministry. Some of you may be called to missions far away from here. It is a daring thing. But most of you, God is going to call right here, have a normal life and live in an unusual counter-cultural way. It is living for Christ that puts condemnation, like Noah, on the culture. I want to give you one more thing about obedience.

Influential obedience

Look who else is mentioned in verse 9. *⁹By 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 of the same promise.* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now the people of Israel will come out of Jacob. They didn't start with Abraham. So you have father, son and grandson. Let me just give you an aside. We need to take personal responsibility for young men and women within our orbit. There is a crisis in Christian manhood right now. There is someone in your life, if you are an adult, whom you can call and text and pray for and encourage.

I got convicted of this on Thursday night, at the event we had here with Carl Trueman. I really didn't understand much of what he said but there were a couple of things that made me remember that I ought to be investing in the next generation. Where I really saw it was Friday night when I went out to the Football game here at Hickory Grove. Our boys played great. They won. But what I was really watching was not only the boys but the coaches, I was watching the families and the students and all the young men and women. Look, I never really needed a mentor, I had a Dad. But the world is different than it was 30 years ago. It's harder for young men and women. And we have the capacity in this church for those who are adults to find someone 20 or 30 years younger. Pray for that young man. Text that young man. We have enough adult women here who are walking with the Lord to invest in the next generation by praying for and providing Gospel influence. You see, there ought to be this influential obedience. It is an affectionate support system.

I know I need to close but let me give you just one more.

The last facet of obedience is found over in verse 10. It is a

Hope driven obedience

10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. There is a certain quality of faith that sees stability and something other than material things. Here is this confident view of the future giving us two words to describe the God that is there. The first is “designer.” He is the architect and the planner, all the details and angles and hidden structure, the blueprints that we don’t understand but we’re glad it’s there. The other word is “builder.” They know how and have the ability to get the job done. Put the two together and we can look into the future and know that our good God has a plan and the power to fulfill His purpose in our lives. Faith in Christ will see you through. Why we are taking The Lord’s Supper so often is because it is good for us. It is a tangible reminder of the grace of God found at the cross.

Before we do that let’s center our minds on the Gospel. Think with me now about the holy God that has created us. We believe in a holy God, a God who loves you. Think the God of the Bible. Think about God and think about who we are. Think about what it is to be a human, a man or a woman created in the image of God. In Genesis chapter 2, sin enters in and is now a part of who we are. The sin in us is so foul, putrid, terrible, that God has to judge it. It’s a terrible thing. Think about Genesis 6 when God wiped humanity off the face of the earth, it’s what we deserve. Think with me about Jesus; what about this grace that God gives us? Jesus, who is all God and all man. He is the one who lives perfectly.

Not only that, we take the bread and the juice today and it’s a reminder of the cross, His body and blood. There at the cross, Jesus takes the wrath of God and for everyone who believes what the Bible says, we get the righteousness. We are born again and God looks at us as if we were Jesus Himself. When we

take The Lord's Supper, it's a family meal. What I mean is, if you are here this morning and not yet a Christian, you don't need to take The Lord's Supper. This is for God's children in Christ. If you're confused about that, I would just suggest that you don't take The Lord's Supper and then afterward have a conversation as to why this one thing separates believers and unbelievers. It's a family meal and as we take The Lord's Supper today, we take it with the assurance of God's grace given to us in Jesus.

(Pastor prays)