

Beginning Faith

by Leonard Ravenhill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, obedience, and spiritual growth, and warns against the dangers of disobedience and neglecting God's word.

Duration: 50:07

Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-2, Hebrews 2:2-4, Hebrews 3:1, Hebrews 11:39-40, Hebrews 12:25

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a personal story about a young man who arrives in a strange country and meets someone who resembles his father. The preacher uses this illustration to emphasize the importance of walking as Jesus walked. He then discusses a man who demonstrated great faith by making a legal document promising to pay a large sum of money despite having only 14 cents in his pocket. The preacher encourages the audience to have faith and trust in God's provision. He also references biblical examples of people who accomplished great things in the power of the Holy Spirit, despite facing opposition and persecution. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the greatness of salvation and the need for compassion in fulfilling the mission of spreading the gospel.

Transcript

I hear that song, I think of a little quip of Dr. Van Tavener. He said, we sing standing on the promises and all we're doing is sitting on the premises. That's not even to support the march, but anyhow, there you are.

One of the irritating things in life right now is the constant fluctuation of prices. The price index is changing and everything, and consumer prices are going up incredibly. But there's one price that remains the same always, and that is the price for the cost of discipleship.

It hasn't varied since the days of Jesus and it never will vary. And I'm sure some of you have read Bonhoeffer's book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, and in the, about the third chapter there he talks, as you remember, about cheap grace, which is a disgrace. And we're in this state, you know, where everything is free.

Grace is free, salvation is free, and God isn't in business. He doesn't sell anything. Gives it all away.

Which is not true. Because God is in the business of selling and you can buy from him. In the Old Testament he says, come buy wine and milk.

In the New Testament he said to the churches, come and buy. What? Buy what? Gold and white raiment. And that's what it says, whether you think of it or not.

I counsel thee to buy of me. Well, how do we buy? This race is not to the swift, this battle is not to the strong, the prizes are not to the rich. In the Christian life, well then how do we buy? Well the only answer I have to that question is this.

We buy by our obedience. Obedience is the key to blessing. I was in a home a while ago and a lady said she was celebrating a birthday.

And somebody said, how old are you? She said, I'm approaching 39. I nearly said from which side, but she said she was approaching 39. And then she said, but I'm only 10 years of age, spiritually.

I said, well how do you make that up? Oh, I got it here in my Bible. I got saved. Let me see, what was the night? The evangelist was so and so, he preached on so and so, and it's just 10 years since.

Well I said, I'm afraid that's got nothing to do with being 10 years old spiritually. I've seen people who have become 10 years old spiritually who've only been saved six months. And I know some people who have been saved 40 years and they're not six months old yet spiritually.

They're still babes. We don't mature just because the clock ticks on. Or again, you get some degrees or a little Bible knowledge.

That's got nothing to do with it. It's according to the way the word gets down in our bloodstream, according to our obedience. I guess you've watched all kinds of things.

You've gone in a place and watched a potter make a vessel. And maybe somebody weaving, and in these days do-it-yourself. You know, it's interesting to see people make things.

The most interesting thing that I have ever watched, I'm saying thing, the most interesting production is to see how God makes men, or how God makes Saints, if you like. And in Hebrews 11 we have this very wonderful catalog. You know what Hebrews 11 is? It's the classic chapter in the New Testament on faith.

Faith is mentioned 24 times in the chapter, 32 times in that particular epistle. It's mentioned about 340 times plus in the New Testament. And do you know how many times it's mentioned in the Old Testament? Just twice.

That's all. You see, if you join a church now, they have an outline of doctrine. It may not be right, but anyhow it's there.

They don't question it. Grandpa put it down there, and everybody's inherited it. And if you sign on the dotted line, you're in.

You're one of us, tragically enough. But there you are. You're accepted because you sign articles of faith.

But in the New Testament and in the Old Testament they did not sign articles of faith. They acted in faith, which is a very different thing. Although I must do, I remember, I think there is a second time, but I couldn't recall it.

I'm a bit tired this morning. But I think there is a second occasion. But there's certainly one occasion when Paul expresses the desire of his heart, and he doesn't pray for a world that's going to hell.

I can find no reference, in fact I'm not sure there's any statement in the New Testament that tells us to pray for lost people. Any of you know where there is one? It is true that Paul said, my heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they may be saved. But where are we taught explicitly to pray for lost people? The concern of the New Testament, after all you get Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Those are the four Gospels, in case you don't know. And right after that you have the Acts of the Apostles. The fifth book, it's like the first five books in the Old Testament.

One, two, three, four. The fifth is a recap of the other four. It's the same with the book of Psalms.

It's five books as I mentioned last night, and the fifth is a recap of the other four. And Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are what? They're the different interpretations, if you like, of the life of Jesus. Then the Acts of the Apostles is the Church doing that Jesus did.

And when did we get the right to stop doing that? That's the only thing Jesus ever intended, is that the Church should be a reproduction of himself and continue doing. Otherwise you have no right to say that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, because somewhere in your theology he stopped doing this, and he stopped giving gifts, and he stopped doing something else. And we try to dispensationalize this, or box this, or you know, get away from our responsibility.

Paul says, writing to the Thessalonians, I'm praying night and day, and not only praying night and day, but praying exceedingly that I may see your faith and supply that which is lacking in your faith. Now he doesn't say they have no faith, he says they have a deficient faith. And I am praying night and day, not that God will give me a better crusade somewhere else, or a bigger love offering, or give me some prestige.

I'm praying night and day I may see your faith. I'm longing for you to shake off your diapers and become men and women that can carry some burden and do some job, and face the devil. And when he writes in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, the first chapter, verse 3, he rejoices, he says, I rejoice that your faith growth exceedingly.

His prayer had been answered. Now faith is the gift of God, sure it is. One of the most famous preachers in the world, I won't mention his name, he's a Baptist, but he often uses the illustration on radio and TV, he says, now you've got faith.

For instance, you sat on that chair, you didn't shake it and say, boy I wonder if it will hold me. You go in a plane, you sit down, a smiling stewardess says to you, yes your number is, you know, B3, sit there. And a man comes in in a uniform, big fine man, says, good morning.

You say, hey a minute. He says, yes sir? Are you the pilot? Yes, oh yes, see my wings, and you see I fly in the friendly skies. And he says, well could I see your pilot's license? Oh yes, sure.

What makes you suspicious? Well you look awfully like my garbage man to me, and I wonder if you'd just borrowed a uniform, because I don't want you flying this big crate, you know, if you're not the right man. And you see his certificate, and you say, fine. He says, well good morning, have a good flight to New York.

Just a minute, do you have a license for the plane? Has it been tested by the government? Has it met the conditions? Oh yes, yes, here it was, it was tested the other day. All the motors were, everything's in order, fine. Well have a good flight to New York.

Just a minute. What now? Fellow was putting some gas in the wings there, and he was talking, and well I'm not so sure he filled them up. And you know, if we get halfway to New York and run out of gas, aviation poison is the strongest in the world.

One drop. Thank you. You don't do that.

You don't check the pilot's license, you don't check the license of the plane, you don't test the gas, you sit in there and away you go. And you're going north, and the plane goes 50 miles south, he's getting the right run and the right lift, and you don't question anything. Now if you have faith like that, transfer that faith into Jesus.

Now that's pure nonsense. Why? Because again, going to Paul's argument in the first, second epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter 3, he says, all men have not faith. Faith is the gift of God and our repentance.

And then writing to the Romans, you may remember that Paul says that we have a measure of faith that are different degrees of faith. You know, faith, we're so liberal, you know, we're not liberal, but we're generous, we say, you know, faith can do anything, brother, faith can do anything. And you're going to pull the world down and you can't even exercise faith to pay your bills, so you better shut up.

In the Bible School of Wales, read that book if you read no other. Reese Howell's Intercessor, written by my good friend Norman Grubber. Fabulous book on faith.

That man did not become a mature man. He did buy a vast estate with 14 cents in his pocket. He did say to the lawyer, I'll give you a balance of, I don't know, \$250,000 in so many days, and all he had was 14 cents.

Now you're either a fool or a fanatic and you've got faith when you do a thing like that. You make a legal document and say within 10 days I'll pay you \$250,000. And if the lawyer knew that he'd only 14 cents in his pocket, he'd never let him sign it, I'm sure.

But after I finished speaking about Bible School one day, Mrs. Howell said, Brother Rainer, would you talk a little while? Well, I usually like that. We went up on the terrace and as we looked over the sea there, over the English Channel, they might call it the Welsh Channel, she said, you see that room? I said, yes, Mrs. Howell, I see that door. My husband went in there at 6 o'clock in the morning and stayed till 6 o'clock at night, every day for 11 months, except one day.

That was the day he went to bury his mother. You see, we think if you read a few books and I become, you know, and stick a few stickers on my automobile and all the rest of it. And I saw a sticker the other day on the card, you know, it said in big letters, don't honk if you love Jesus.

All right, well, no, no, no, no, that's not it at all. If you put that little baby of yours to bed that's, say, two years old tonight, and you go in the morning and as you open the door there's a fine young man and he says, Hi Dad, he says, Dad, what do you mean? Well, you put me to bed last night. I didn't put you to bed.

You baby lifted me in your arms. What, and you grew to be six foot two overnight and you're 20 years, 22 years. This is preposterous.

And yet some of us want to do that in the spiritual realm. I'm sure some of you already are wanting to get out of college next week because you feel the willful ignorance of your professors. But, you know, superiority comes very quickly to lots of us, doesn't it? I mean, we soon feel that we know it all, we've got all the answers.

Rees-Als went in that room and he stayed there for 11 months. Well, of course, he came out and ate and all the rest of it. But every day for 12 hours he was alone with God.

And when his faith matured some of the most amazing things happened. Faith can't do anything. Faith can do anything consistent with God's will.

If faith could do anything you wouldn't need the second half of Hebrews 11. These all died in the faith. Why? Why didn't they have a prayer meeting and deliver them? There would be no martyrs in the Church of the Living God if faith could do anything.

We'd pray them all out of prison. But you need faith, the same faith, to die at the stage that you need to be the key figure in a superior revival. You see, we were in a meeting and the lady said, well, I like to come at night and hear Brother Angell preach, but I'd like to hear him teach in the morning.

I think I get a lot more out of it. It's been a real blessing to me this week. I'd like to buy him something.

I don't know. No, no, no. And then I decided I would give him a check.

The lady said, you're going to give him money. Yeah, I'm going to give him some money. Oh, she said, don't do that.

He lives by faith. Those are the ideas people have of faith. You know, it's a magic carpet at a wishing well or some strange mysterious thing.

But faith here is defined in Hebrews 11 as substance. Comes from two Latin words, sub and stance. Sub means under and stance means stand.

Somebody would say, Mr. Angell, stance isn't very good this morning. He's leaning on the desk. No, I should stand up erect and talk this way.

So substance, sub means under, stance means to stand. So substance means understand. No, it doesn't mean, it means to get under.

It means this, that right under all these exceeding great and precious promises. To put it in the language of a hymn I love very much and usually have when I'm teaching Hebrews, how firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord is laid for your faith in his excellent word. And I don't care how the devil attacks you, physically, mentally, emotionally, otherwise, he's only after one thing in your life and that's to destroy your faith.

Whether he does it through some rotten old deacon or some preacher that isn't straight or some other thing. The one thing he's after, he doesn't care how brilliant you are, he doesn't care how famous we are, as long as we have no faith. Now in his introduction he has a small book, Dr. Orton Wiley, the Nazarene, used to be in Pasadena that Nazarene College years ago.

Excuse me, he's dead now. In his introduction to the epistle to the Hebrews, he says, remember this epistle has not one word to say to lost people. And now when I read that it kind of staggered me at first.

Boy, this epistle has nothing to say to lost people. Wait a minute. Is there any epistle in the New Testament has anything to say to lost people? I mean, are they addressed to lost people? The epistle of Paul to the Roman Christians, Thessalonians, Philippians, and so forth.

But this is not addressed, the epistle of Paul, to where they say Paul didn't write it. All right, well who did? Well let's say for argument he did. That will make him fourteen epistles that he wrote.

It is not addressed, the epistle of Paul to a certain group in a certain colony. The address is in the third chapter, verse one, wherefore holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling. That's to whom the book is addressed.

Now it's pretty shattering to me at least, to realize again that these men and women in Hebrews 11, they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises. They dealt with whole nations. Or they dealt with animals.

And women received their dead ways to life again, and not one of them ever had a Bible. Be careful how you strut with your superior knowledge, because if you know more than I know, you're going to have to account for more up there than I have to account for. Did one of them in Hebrews 11 ever have a Bible? No sir, they did not.

But look what they did without a Bible, and look how little we do with a Bible. Here's a complete revelation. How does the epistle begin? God who at sundry times in indivisible manner spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, and so forth and so forth.

All right. What does it say? It says God has spoken. It says later on in the twelfth chapter and verse 25, See ye refuse not him that speaketh.

It says in the second chapter, if the word spoken by angels was steadfast. In other words, angels don't tell lies. Do you think God does? The word spoken by angels was steadfast.

The word of the angel to Abraham in the door of his tent. The word of the angel to Sodom. The word spoken by angels was steadfast.

Therefore see ye refuse not him that speaketh. As I've said rather facetiously and yet painfully, that one day somebody's going to read the Bible and believe it. You see, we want to dissect it.

We want to work on it like somebody goes up in a lab there and takes a mouse to pieces or something else and dissects it all, or even takes an automobile, and we want to dissect it theologically, and we want to put God in little sections and say he did that one day, he doesn't do it anymore. Listen, if you start shifting around like that and trying to accommodate God, I want to tell you lovingly that he doesn't need it. God isn't seeking help from any of us.

He's seeking obedience. And God never changes, we say. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.

You say there's no word in this epistle to last man. Why, I heard a preacher preach the other day a wonderful message on the 2nd chapter verse 3. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? It's

still written to believers. How shall we escape? This great big, sick, sorry, sad and sinful world outside is in that condition because the church is in this condition.

If you start making excuses or trying to say this isn't for today, brother, you're going to have trouble with the liberals. Because that's exactly what they do. They don't believe this and they don't believe that.

Oh, well I'm a bit more generous than that. I'll give God a bit more latitude. Look brother, you either take the whole of this book or none of it.

Once you start sitting in judgment on the book, you're in trouble. Let the book sit in judgment on me and on you. Well, you say, it says how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? What a great salvation it is.

Hebrews 7.25, he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. And if you don't believe in that, if you don't believe, whether you, I don't care what degree of depravity you say a man has, you can be like the Puritans and go to the nth degree in human rottenness. You've got to have a salvation so big that if God Almighty plunges you in the middle of a jungle somewhere in South America or somewhere in the South Seas, where you see savagery and heathendom, or you see some of the voodoo stuff down in Haiti, that will turn your stomach over.

You see them rip open a pig and drink some of its blood while it's warm, and you see them do other things, and you see them take young people and lay them out naked and submit them to all kinds of things that are not much less than atrocities. Unless you have a gospel and the compassion, then I suggest you forget the mission field and ask God to give you a little pastorate somewhere in a cornfield. How great is this salvation? Well I wouldn't like to guess, would you? I'll tell you how great it is because I got a note here from the Apostle about it.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Here are the conditions which at first began to, was spoken to us by the Lord, number one, and confirmed to us by them that heard him, number two. And number three, God bearing them witness. This is the gospel with signs and wonders and miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

And if you and I go to a church that doesn't have all those in it, it does not have the gospel. It has a version, or maybe a perversion, but it does not have the gospel. Because this is what it says.

Signs, wonders, miracles, divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Yes, this is a fabulous chapter if we time. I give you that background.

This is Hebrews 11th chapter. I don't know if you've read any of Eric Sauer's books. Anybody read Eric Sauer? S-A-U-E-R.

Well, you should get every book he's written. He has a marvelous book on Hebrews 11. It's called The Arena of Faith.

He gives a background of the days, the conditions that the people had to meet to whom this epistle was written. You see, unless we're careful, we start reading the New Testament through American lenses or British lenses or seeing them through a jet age and all the rest. It's difficult to think back two thousand years, isn't it? One thing that the Hebrews does amongst others is this, as you know, is to show us that Jesus Christ is the sum and the substance.

He's the center and circumference. He's the Alpha and the Omega of our faith. And these people, as I read, and I hope I don't read between the lines when I read the lines, is this.

But one of the exhortations to these people is this, that strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Often we feel the whole world is falling apart. Wait a minute, wait a minute, says the apostle.

Do you know there were once a people, and this is what they did. They didn't even have the New Testament revelation, but they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises. This is not talking about New Testament days, it's talking about Old Testament days.

And they did all these things in the power of the Spirit of God. Subdued kingdoms again, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, and stopped the mouths of lions. And the people of that day were blazing mad at them.

And do you know what the reward was for doing all the things they did? You know, a little guy like Daniel facing a whole vast system. If you like, the Watergate of his day. The three Hebrew children.

Oh, we've read it since we were youngsters. It doesn't faze us too much, does it? They stood up against those systems because they had a faith that wouldn't shrink. As a hymn writer says, they're oppressed by many a foe that would not tremble on the brink of poverty or woe, that would not murmur or repine beneath a chastening rock.

And do you know what they got for doing it? They wandered about in sheepskins and in goatskins. Because some of you next week you'll rush off and buy some double knits and white buckskin shoes to show you're a real evangelist. But they wandered around in sheepskins and in goatskins, being afflicted and tormented.

And do you know what God says? The world says they're insane to do that. Why doesn't Daniel become a politician? He could lead the whole nation. Those three Hebrew lads with the genius, they could make millions.

Why do they go that silly way? They're idiots. But it's always nice to look and see what God says. Do you know what God said about those idiots and madmen? It says the world isn't worthy of them, even.

You know, these days we're always after status symbols. Let me tell you something. A man who's filled with the Spirit of God doesn't need status symbols.

He's got all the status he needs in this world. You don't make a man a hero by putting a uniform on him, do you? And if you put a uniform on him and stick a medal on him, have you made him a hero? You make a man a preacher because you give him a diploma and a license? Of course you don't. This is something that God has to work in us and work out of us.

God will work it in that you go out and you work out your own salvation. These people were suffering because they were true to Christ. Somebody says, hey Pete, John, come here.

Not John the Apostle, another John. And he says, uh, you're not really worshiping with those folk up that back street, are you? Hey John, just look there. There's the high priest.

Do you know what it says? It says the garments of the high priest in the Old Testament were garments of glory and of beauty. They were magnificent. God designed them.

And when he started to move, you heard the tinkling of the bells on his skirt. You saw the pomegranates and you saw that marvelous breastplate and all the other wonderful things that he had. Now John, he's going in the temple.

I don't want to rub it in, John, and be hard on you, but why don't you come back to the temple and worship? We'll forget that you run after that, what was he, uh, oh he was a carpenter, wasn't he? The fella that you followed. Uh, Jesus fella. Come on, we'll forget it.

Come back, come back and worship with us. I mean, after all, you don't have a temple, do you? And you don't have a high priest, and you don't have the law and the prophets. And, and you've, you've so many things.

I mean, you don't have mortgages like we had. And the Christian begins to wilt under this and his knees begin to knock. And suddenly he gets a shot of faith and he says, just a minute, are you through? And he says, so what? Well, you just said we, we don't have a temple.

Well, you don't. Look at that massive temple and the high priest. We have a temple, too.

You, you have? In Jerusalem? Where is it? He said, you're looking at it. What do you mean, I'm looking? He says, I'm the temple of God. He doesn't dwell in temples made with that.

I used to wonder why churches have so many bushes around them now. I was in a big Baptist church, uh, about three years ago, my dear wife. And I noticed when the guys came up to church, the last thing they did was, you know, while I draw this fleeting breath.

And, uh, and then they stuffed it in a tree by the door, you know. And I went and looked and shook the tree, it was like a Christmas tree. It was loaded with cigarette ends.

So on the Wednesday night, I said, now while we're finding the text, this so and so, and as we're doing this, gentlemen, just take out your cigarettes and smoke. What did he say? I said, I said, smoke while I'm preaching. Smoke while I'm preaching? Well, I said, this isn't God's temple.

He doesn't dwell in buildings. If you defile the temple by the time you got to the door, keep smoking. It won't offend God any more in here than it does there.

It may offend the choir or the preacher or deacons, but, uh, don't worry about it. No temple? Sure we are. And the temple of the Holy Spirit.

No priest? Your priest dies. We have an eternal priest and he never dies. Your sacrifice you make every day.

Once in the end of the age, he appeared to put away sin. There is no repetition. That's why the mass is a blasphemy in the Roman church.

If you want anything to shatter Roman Catholic theology, read the epistles of the Hebrews. It'll blow it sky high. In fact, one of the oldest of commentators says that God, foreseeing the dangerous heresies that would be hatched by the papacy, forestalled this by giving us this epistle.

All right. So they had a temple. You didn't have a Moses.

Moses, the great lawgiver, he brought us out of Egypt. Yes, he did, but he couldn't bring you into the promised land. Well, Joshua brought us in the promised land.

Yes, he did, but he couldn't give you rest. And every time the good fundamental Jew comes up with an argument, the Christian has an answer right against it, right out of this epistle. All right, I'm doing a bit of leaping here, but there are three things that are always consistent with faith.

Number one, faith reckons. What did I say? I said that faith occurs so many times. The key to me, to this chapter and to the epistle and to modern life, is Hebrews 11.6. He that cometh to God must believe that he is.

He's everything he said he was in this book. He's not going to manipulate it just because you say, well, he said he'll give you all you ask, and I'm going to ask him for a thousand dollars. A lady offered me a beautiful Lincoln Continental to drive out here.

It's, I guess, less than a year old. I don't know if it's 10,000 miles on, and she said you'll have a better journey. Well, I'm glad I didn't have it, because some woman backed into my car the other night and did \$111 worth of damage, so she backed into the Lincoln.

Well, forget it. But anyhow, this lady was sure that we should use this lovely Lincoln. But you know, some fellow phoned just before we got to the house, and at four o'clock in the morning he said, God woke me up this morning and told me you're to give me that Lincoln.

Isn't that nice? It's always easy to get guidance for somebody else, isn't it? When you are in trouble and, oh, I'll tell you what your problem is. He's been trying to find the answer to his problem for six months and can't find it, but he'll find yours in six seconds. Isn't it? Faith does what? It reckons God is.

Firm as his throne, his promise stands. God is. Number two, it not only reckons, it risks.

And it not only risks, it rests. There remaineth a rest for the people of God. We don't talk about that much.

Oh, we preach on half of Matthew 11, 28. Come unto me all ye that weary and everyway, and I'll give you rest. And we tell the sinner how to find rest, but we don't cross the bridge into the second half of the text.

Take my yoke upon you, learn of me, and ye shall find rest. They've already got rest. Rest from their guilt.

Rest from the catalogue of sins against them. But how many people really have rest in God? Talk about relaxing. There's nothing more relaxing than to rest on God who is.

And as I say, they knew that God, and not only did they know that God, but now we have this complete revelation of God, and God isn't going to say another thing to the world if it lasts two thousand years. He said all he's going to say. What more can he say than to you he has said? When I was a young preacher, I used to read Jowett a lot, and I liked him.

Good English preacher, Dr. J. H. Jowett. And I remember reading him one day on Hebrews, and he said, you know, Hebrews 11 is the Westminster Abbey of the Old Testament. This is where God buried all his great saints.

And I swallowed that. After all, it was said by a famous preacher. It must be right.

This is where God buries all his great saints. Like Westminster Abbey, you go in that corner, they buried the poets, and up there they buried somebody else, and up here, and there, somebody said not long ago, to me they thought the Beatles should be buried there. And I said, I think so, today.

But we buried the famous people there. And Hebrews 11 is where God buries his famous people. Oh, come on now.

What are they there for? Faith. Staggering people. You know, you look at Abraham and say, boy, his head's up in the clouds.

I could never be an Abraham. He's such a fantastic man. Hebrews 11, if you look from one angle, it's like looking up at the Empire State Building, pardon me, from the top and looking down.

But if you get to the bottom and look up, it's a very different situation. If you look at these men in Hebrews 11 from one angle, they'll terrify you. And if you look at another angle, you'll almost turn away in disgust.

Isn't Hebrews 11 a catalogue of saints? No, Hebrews 11 is an FBI gallery of wanted men. Rascals and rogues. You say that about Abraham? Abraham, the man of faith? Abraham was justified by faith.

Sure he was, if you believe the Apostle Paul, and he wasn't. If you believe James, yes he was, it's the other side of the coin. The Apostle Paul says what? Abraham, our father, was justified by faith.

What is it saying, James, that Abraham was justified by works? Because faith without works is dead. All right. Abraham set off from Ur of the Chaldees, he was maybe a multimillionaire, he left everything behind.

And he stepped out in faith, are you sure? Did you ever read a verse in the 51st chapter of Isaiah, verse 2 I think it is, where it says, I called Abraham alone. Did he go alone? No. He took an old man with him to help him, and he took a young man.

No, no, he didn't set out with a beaded. And then when he got in a corner, do you remember what the saintly man did? Oh, that blonde, that lovely blonde you have with you, is that your wife? No, no, she's not my wife, she's my sister. He lied, even after he'd made a total commitment, and gone out of business, and left his millions behind.

And when he got in a jam, he lied to get out of it. And a bit later, when God made a promise that seemed totally unreasonable and irrational, he thought the only way to help Almighty God out of a situation was to get another girl pregnant. If you think that isn't a headache, you better go meet Kissinger when he arrives back tomorrow in Washington.

Because that's what he's wrestling with, isn't he? The offspring of Ishmael. Abraham? He's a liar. Abraham? He was an unbeliever.

Abraham? And what about Noah? He got drunk. What about Moses? He killed a man. Do you think if I'd been writing Hebrews 11, I'd have put a prostitute in? But God knows, remember, the ray hath the harlot.

Noah the drunkard? Not for me, thank you. Jephthah? Foolish man that he was. It does not be very sensible in Hebrews 11, that's why it's passed on to us.

So that you'll be encouraged to see stupid as you are. It's where you've stumbled and staggered, and the Lord says, hey, just a minute, I'm in the business of taking a vessel that's been dishonored. Was it the 16th

or the Jeremiah or the 18th? And he can make a vessel again and to honor, sanctify it.

It doesn't matter how big the crack is. He's willing, he's patient, he's long-suffering. I would have put people in Hebrews 11.

I'd have left most of them out. I'd have put others in. I was mentioned one morning in a meeting.

I said, Enoch isn't mentioned in this chapter. A little lady came up to me afterwards. She said, do you know why he isn't mentioned? I said, not really, do you? She said, oh yes, I know.

Oh, I said, share your knowledge. She said, well, Enoch isn't mentioned in the chapter. Um, pardon me, Elijah isn't mentioned in the chapter.

Because it says later in the chapter, doesn't it, that these all died in the faith. I said, yes. She said, well, he didn't die in the faith, did he? No, he didn't.

That's right, he went up in a chariot. That's your answer. Going out of the service, she said to the pastor, I told Mr. Raymond something he didn't know.

So I said, excuse me, could you tell me something else I don't know from Hebrews 11? I said, yes, maybe I could. I said, who's the second man listed in Hebrews 11? I don't have too good a memory. Oh, I said, my dear lady, I'll tell you.

The second man mentioned in Hebrews 11 is Enoch. What's he doing in the chapter? Hmm? Did he die? No, he was translated that he should not see God. I said, he didn't.

That's right, he didn't die, did he? Any more than Elijah did. He never beat a woman, you know. Boy, she didn't answer as quick as that.

She said, you see, just showed you the Bible contradicts itself. But it doesn't say at the end of the chapter, all these people in the chapter died in faith. It isn't saying that.

Oh yes, this is a, this to me is a most shattering chapter. There's a pattern in it. You can't change it.

God put it there. Who's the first person mentioned in Hebrews 11? Abel. What is he mentioned for? Because he, he built an altar, the first altar that we know of.

An altar involves a lot of things. You remember later in the chapter when Abraham says to his servants, stay here. I and the lad are going up.

What did God say to him? You go up onto that mountain and what? Offer thine only son Isaac. And what did he say? He said, you stay here while I and the lad go yonder and sacrifice. No, he didn't say that.

He said, well I and the lad go yonder and worship. But worship always involves sacrifice. Sometimes it's easier to run down the strip or somewhere with a bunch of tracts.

Or say, well I, I feel I should pray and not go to school. Or say, oh yes, yes, a lot of, you, you can cover your weakness up if you want. But I'll tell you this, if you're going to worship, it's a costly business.

He built an altar. And an altar demands sacrifice. And sacrifice involves worship.

And worship means meditation and contemplation and adoration. I mentioned the other day, in case you're not here, Dr. Towles was telling me that he would lay four or five hours on a, on a rug in front of his desk and, uh, and he would worship. Not say a word of prayer.

Not say a word of praise. If you want to act the fool, you could go outside. I get incensed and upset, I confess.

You've all the time to talk to each other, love each other, and fool around. And you come to God's house and want to do it. Now if you're little children, I might correct you and turn you over and spank you.

But you're professed to be adults. And you didn't pay to come. And I got out of a sick bed and drove nearly three thousand miles to come here.

And the least thing you can give me your attention, I didn't ask you for money. Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth. And I'm not afraid to chasten people sometimes.

If you're retarded, I'd excuse you. If you're juveniles, I'd excuse you if you're under 15, but you're not. All right, let's leave it there.

But to say again, you see, that obviously you don't know a thing about worship. At least some don't. When a brilliant man like Dr. Tozer could say, I meditate, I contemplate the holiness, the majesty, the glory, the long-suffering, the patience of God.

When I was in London a few years ago talking with Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones of Westminster, he said, Brother Ravenhill, you're going back to the States? I said, yes sir. He said, you'll see Dr. Tozer. I said, well I spend as much time as I can with that marvelous man.

He said, would you please thank him for writing that book, The Pursuit of God? When I saw Dr. Tozer, I thanked him, and he said, Len. And you know, Dr. Tozer had an office. I don't think it was larger than from here to there, and the books were not on shelves like that.

They were stacked up from the floor to the ceiling. He had the roughest old desk, and I teased him, I'm sure the typewriter came out of the ark. And there was nothing about that office that looked like the modern office of so many preachers, you know.

And I said, I was talking with Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones in London, and he sent his greetings and hopes to meet you in the flesh one day. I don't think they ever did. And he says your book, The Pursuit of God, will last when most of modern books have been thrown away.

It is a classic. I remember him doing something like this. He said, Len, I didn't go out of this office for 25 years.

25 years I didn't have a vacation. It's my distilled wisdom. It's my distilled knowledge of God.

I put it all together after periods of adoration and periods of worship. And you see, again, I say this. You see, we've got an idea that the thing to do, you get saved and get involved.

That's the worst thing you can do. The best thing you can do after you're saved is get away for three months as quiet as you can, or six months. Our home has been open this past year to preachers.

Some of them have big, successful churches, and they come to get away a few days and pray with us and talk with us. And many of them, you'd envy them. They've such a big home and a beautiful car and a swimming pool and all the rest.

And they're weary, weary, weary, weary men, worn out with legislation, worn out with administration in the church, worn out with other things. And when we say to them, remember what God says, they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. You see, we're such activists.

We think we're doing God's service. If you go to Bed Bath & Beyond and say, boy, we've been out six hours, we've given out 494 tracts and we talked to 60 people and so many. And you may do all that and never satisfy the heart of Jesus Christ.

I've seen people come to the altar sometimes two, three hundred at a time, at a night in some big mass meetings. And I haven't been as happy as some meetings where I've been where not a single person came. Do you know why? Because in some meetings I felt we touched at depth.

You see, it isn't the case. You're not here to be a soul winner, first of all. Jesus didn't die to rescue you from hell.

That's a fringe benefit as vast as it is. He died that we might be conformed to the image of his son. Let me say one thing and leave.

A friend of mine in an English family, the English family went to Africa and they left behind their oldest son to be educated, thinking he would follow the family and he didn't. And 20 years after, the son that had been born to them in Africa decided to come to England and so they wrote their eldest son and said, will you please meet him at Tilbury Docks on the River Thames in London? He'll be on a certain boat. And all the way over the boy thought, well, I've never seen my brother, I don't know how I recognize him anyhow.

And when they got near the dock everybody was waving and throwing confetti and throwing papers, you know. And the boy looked. No, no, nobody there bears a family likeness.

And the people began to thin away, you know, people embracing each other, picking up baggage, going away. And finally here's the young fellow, 20-year-old fellow, come to a strange country, didn't know which way to turn, what to do. And there were about three men left at the rail there.

Suddenly one of them turned and he walked away, put his hands behind his back and he started walking. The young fellow says, hey! The fellow turned around and said, you know, I'm Jack Jones. Are you Billy Jones? Yeah, good to see you.

And he uses the illustration very often. He said physically he didn't bear much resemblance, but as soon as he turned and walked, ah, he's got my dad's walk. He walks exactly like my dad.

He keeps his hands behind his back and he rolls his shoulders and turns one foot out of it. He's a duplicate of my dad. He walks as his fathers walked.

And the word of God says you and I are to walk as he walked. We're to walk in the light. And God doesn't make two, there are no duplicate copies in Hebrews 11.

They're all single copies. Some of them don't get much space. Oh yes, Moses gets a lot, Abraham gets a lot.

The most perfect characters in the Old Testament were who? Daniel. You can't find fault in him. Joseph.

What did he get? Well, here it is. It's as easy as this. You can learn all you have to learn about him in one sense this way.

Look, he was up here and his daddy sent him to Dothan to take some sandwiches. And when he got to Dothan, his brother sold him and put him down in a pit. And they took him out of the pit and took him down into Egypt.

When he got to Egypt, they put him in jail. When he got in jail, the bottom fell out. And he didn't do anything wrong, but he got 13 years in jail for doing it.

And that's all that happened. It was down, down, and God sits up there and doesn't vindicate him. People build up the right, say, do you think he'd still be in jail if he was the pure innocent man? I tell you he was guilty.

He had an affair with Potiphar's wife, clear as can be. He hadn't done a thing wrong, and God let him go down there. And other men were delivered through his ministry, and he's still left in jail.

Down, down, down, down, down, down. And then God starts working. And it's up, and up, and up, and up, and up, until he sits on the throne, and the king goes out of town.

He says, here's my chain of office, and here's the key of the kingdom. I'll look after things while I come back. Oh, I'd like that side, wouldn't you? Like the little fellow said when he'd been in his daddy's home, who was a pastor, and been through a series of meetings, and he watched the missionaries get loaded with different things.

And somebody bought them a new car and new clothes. You know, they stacked the front up and said, these are all for the missionaries. There's a new station where I can have a side for them.

And somebody said to the pastor's little boy, what would you like to be when you grow up? He said, a missionary on furlough. And I think most of us would like to be a missionary on furlough, but brother, when you get away from CBC, and maybe there's nothing dramatic about being in some dirty hellhole in Philadelphia or New York or somewhere here, or going alone in the jungle, oh boy, your theology might wobble like that. But I'll tell you one thing.

You can get very, very tired sometimes of working in the kingdom, certainly tired working in the kingdom, but you'll never get tired of worship. Never get tired of worship. New every morning are thy mercies and great is thy faithfulness.

He is the same today, yesterday, today, and forever. And to use another Nazarene phrase, a book, if you'll never find it, buy it, even if you have to have blackwall tires on your car. It's called *The Possibilities of Grace* by Lowry.

It's a big, thick book. The Nazarenes have an abridged edition, I think, if they still have it. But isn't this what it's all about? You know, some people will die millionaires and they go to our churches and they'll die paupers spiritually.

And some of our pastors and maybe missionaries and others will die paupers in the material world, but die spiritual millionaires. God's going to work in your life if you'll let him. And he'll beat you up now and again.

Yeah? Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and not only that, he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. But do you know why he does it? I'll tell you why. That we might be partakers of his holiness.

That's what the chapter says. And when he started working on Abraham, he was 75. And when he finished working on Abraham, he was 175.

And just let me look around a minute. Most of you, it seems, have a good way to go yet if he's going to work on you a hundred years. And it says that when you find out God's will, you'll need a patience to do it.

Do you ever pray something like this? Lord, I want patience, and I want it now. That's what most of us want, isn't it? God's will for Abraham a hundred and years. Go build an ark.

Everybody sneers every day. It had never rained on the earth. God watered the earth back.

And there's a fellow who says that big old stupid thing is going to, phew, he's a nice man. I like to do business with Noah, but his religion's crazy. A hundred and twenty years of patience to build an ark.

A hundred years to build a man called Abraham. So we've all a long way to go yet, haven't we? We don't become saints overnight. You don't become saints out of one tough experience.

And God isn't capricious, and he doesn't play jokes. We're more precious to him than all the gold in Fort Knox or all the stars of heaven. And what he wants to do is not just save us from hell, but that we might be partakers of his holiness.

That we're to be what? Predestinated what? Just to be saved? No, more than that, to be conformed to the image of his Son. And Jesus learned obedience by the things that he suffered. And he spared not his own son, so he won't spare us.

We thank you, Father, this morning for your word. Bless it to our hearts and help us to endure. As this word occurs so often in this epistle, they endured, they endured, and Christ endured.

We thank you for enduring grace that we may do thy will. In Jesus name. Amen.

Thank you. We really hope that this teaching has ministered to you, and in some way drawn you closer to our Lord Jesus.

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