

Seeing Comes by Hearing

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to our Bibles, to our reading this morning, and you will find that in Hebrews chapter 11, we've been going through this remarkable book in the New Testament, a long book, a very challenging book, but very, very necessary.

And we come this morning to a well-known chapter, Hebrews chapter 11, which we will look at this weekend, next week, possibly even the week after. But we're going to begin this morning looking really particularly at the first seven verses, but I want to read in from the end of chapter 10.

This is one of the places where these chapter divisions are artificial and unhelpful in our Bibles, so just ignore the big 11 there, and let's read from verse 35 of chapter 10.

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised.

For yet a little while in the coming one will come, and will not delay, and my righteous one shall live by faith. But if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.

[1 : 16] But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. And faith is the assurance or the substance of things hoped for, the conviction, the evidence of things not seen.

For by it, by faith, the people of old receive their commendation. 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.

By faith, Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts.

And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. By faith, Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found because God had taken him.

Now, before he was taken up, he was commended as having pleased God. And without faith, it's impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists, that he is, and that he rewards those who seek him.

[2 : 34] By 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. Amen.

May God bless to us his word. Well, do open your Bibles at Hebrews 11, and the passage we're looking at this morning, which is all about teaching us that seeing comes by hearing.

I wonder what concerns have filled your mind in the last few days. I guess probably it has been the coronavirus. It's all over the news, and the potential effects that it might have to devastate the world in terms of the economies of the world, which are so linked together these days.

But also, of course, in other ways, in terms of illness, in terms of the fear of death. And, of course, it's natural, isn't it, that we fear these things and what might be coming to our lives.

[3 : 45] Maybe by next weekend, we'll be banning shaking hands together when we come to church. Maybe we'll not be able to come to church together at all in a few weeks' time. Who knows? But, friends, here's the thing.

This portion of scripture that we've been studying together reminds us that there is something far more important that ought to concern our minds and hearts, something that is certainly coming to this world, and that is the judgment of Almighty God.

This world is in the last days of the human era, says the writer, not because of some climate change emergency or a coronavirus emergency, but simply because with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and through his death and his resurrection, God has accomplished all that is needed for this

world's rescue and renewal.

Which is why this letter calls it such a great salvation. Jesus Christ has become, we're told, the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, chapter 5, verse 9.

And that's the glorious prospect that all who obey him will inherit when he returns. Chapter 9, verse 28. And as we'll see later in chapter 12, that will be the day when he shakes not only this earth, but the heavens themselves.

[5 : 02] And the whole creation, as we know it, will be removed in order that an unshakable, eternal kingdom will remain forever, gloriously fulfilling all God's purposes and promises for his people.

For his people, notice. For those who obey him, not for those who oppose him. Remember the warning last time in chapter 10, verse 27, about the adversaries and the reminder of very real and terrible judgment.

And of course, obeying him means not just a one-off decision for Jesus at some meeting sometime. But it means a lifelong enduring till the very end in the gospel.

Faithfulness to the new covenant, the eternal covenant in his blood. Look at chapter 10, verse 36 there. You have need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God, that is when you have been obedient to him right to the end, you may receive what is promised.

That's what it means to have faith. Look at verse 38. Not shrinking back, not led by the ways of this world, but enduring and being led by the word of God to the very end.

[6 : 19] That's what it means to live by faith. Enduring obedience, not to our world, but to God's word right to the end. And that is the people we are, he says in verse 39.

If we are professing Christ today, we are not of those who shrink back into the world to be destroyed on the great day of judgment, which is coming. Look at verse 37.

The coming one will come and not delay. No, no, but we are those who have faith and preserve their souls. As have been all God's true children right from the beginning.

That's what chapter 11, verse 2 is saying. It's by that. It's by faith that the people of old receive their commendation. That's very important, actually, by the way, in the context of this letter, isn't it?

Because these Jewish Christians were under great pressure to go back, to go back to something much more visible, much more tangible to the trappings of Jewish religion, with its temple, with its priests, with its sacrifices, with all those comforting, familiar messages.

[7 : 23] Things you can see and smell and touch. Very tempting. To make you feel less alien from your family and your culture. Less stigmatized.

More acceptable. And maybe for the tender soul, perhaps more reassured about your identity within this visible, historic religion. But what the apostle is saying here is that, no, from the very beginning, what marked out the true people of God was not outward religious trappings, but real living faith.

By faith it was that these ancients whom you revere, that they were commended by God. And by faith alone. That's what verse 2 is saying. And that's the constant message of the New Testament. Paul says the same thing in Romans chapter 4, where he was being accused of undermining the law, the Torah, the Jewish scriptures. On the contrary, he says, it's we who uphold and establish the law.

Abraham, the righteous one, the patriarch of Israel, Abraham did not waver or distrust concerning the promise of God. But he grew strong in his faith.

[8 : 30] As he gave glory to God, Abraham believed God. And it was credited to him for righteousness. And so here, all the way through Hebrews 11, where it's Abraham and Moses, along with the others who dominate the landscape, as powerful examples of real saving faith.

Faith that endured to the end. That's the great emphasis. All the way through Hebrews 11. Faith, the very end of life. Verse 13. All these died in faith.

In fact, some of them, all we're told about is their death. Verse 21 and 22. Jacob and Joseph.

Because that's all that matters in the end. It's only salvation or perishing that will matter for eternity. Nothing else. And Jesus himself warns us, doesn't he, many times. The love of many in these last days will grow cold. Because you'll be hated for my name's sake.

There'll be tribulation. And many, he says, will fall away and betray one another. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And all these great cloud of witnesses that have gone before us, they were commended because they did endure to the end.

[9 : 48] And the last verse of chapter 11 tells us they hadn't yet received the inheritance because they'll receive that great eternal inheritance only with us when the Lord Jesus comes again.

With us who have received far greater privileges than they had in this visible world, in our time in history. Not just God's word of promise, but we've received God's final supreme word in his son, the Lord Jesus.

And not just God's reconciling work foreshadowed in the sacrifices and in the priesthoods of the temple, but the finished work of the Lord Jesus, our great high priest forever.

So how much more than they, how much more must we, surrounded by that great cloud of witnesses, how much more must we endure to the end and run the race that's marked out for us? That's what he goes on to say in chapter 12. But isn't it striking that to teach us in these last days about enduring faith, even though we have so much more, just as Paul does in Romans, Hebrews, he turns us back to the great saints of old.

[10:58] Because, you see, the Bible is one story from beginning to end. There's one savior, there's one salvation right from the very start. And that means that the nature of saving faith has been the same from the very beginning.

And that's what we have to learn, you see, because these heroes of the faith, as we like to call them in chapter 11, they're not people who had some kind of superhuman qualities, some great courage and strength beyond other ordinary mortals, beyond people like us.

No, not at all. That's the whole point. They were simply those who heard God's voice and hearkened to God's voice, not hardening their hearts.

They were those who heard and obeyed, not those who heard and yet rebelled. Remember back in chapter 3 and 4. So the command, you see, to have faith and endure, the command to preserve our souls, isn't a summons to some kind of superhuman steely determination that's beyond most of us. No, it's simply a summons to do what people of faith have always done, to hear and to go on hearing and heeding the voice of God, not hardening our hearts, and not instead listening to the voice of the world, which will only lead us to disaster.

[12:22] Faith isn't some superhuman characteristic, some virtue. Faith, in the Bible at least, is simply our response to God's prior revelation.

The faith of these ancients was simply their response to God's word in their day and our faith is simply our response to God's word in our day. God's been speaking in many ways and at various times right from the very beginning.

That's the first verse of Hebrews. And he's still speaking today. But we can see from the lives of those who have gone before us what that faith actually looks like.

And that's what the whole of chapter 11 is doing. But this first little section in verses 1 to 7 gives us the whole thing, as it were, in microcosm. Verses 1 to 3 show us what faith does.

That how it's God's revelation alone that opens our eyes to eternal unseen realities. And then verses 4 to 7 show us how faith does that. That it's God's revelation alone that brings us into eternal relationship with the unseen God himself.

[13:29] And these two things, of course, are inseparable. Because it's when our hearts have been opened by God's word to the eternal person of God that our eyes are opened to the eternal purposes of God.

Look at verses 1 to 3 first. These tell us that it's by faith we perceive the reality of the unseen eternal world.

And our eyes are opened to the eternal purposes of God. These verses are saying that only by faith that is, only by receiving the revelation of God can we see the invisible eternal world and its reality. And so live for the as yet unseen world to come even in our life in this world. Don't be confused by verse 1 especially if you've got the NIV which is very unhelpful particularly here.

It says faith is being sure. And that makes it very subjective. It makes it like it's a definition of faith. What is faith? Well, faith is being sure of things hoped for.

[14:35] Almost as though you could actually work up a belief if you tried hard enough and things that aren't actually true. No, no, no. That's not what this means at all. Faith is itself something objective.

If you've got the old authorized version, it's best of all. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. The evidence of things unseen. Substance means something objective.

It's objective evidence. It's a guarantee. One lexicon puts it, it's a title deed. It's the thing that legally guarantees your future possession. Which in this case is the inheritance of the world to come.

And the word that's translated conviction in the ESV could perhaps better be translated demonstration. Faith is the demonstration of the unseen.

Faith brings into our actual experience now the real unseen God. And our experience of him is the evidence of the reality that we have by his promise, which is guaranteed in the future.

[15 : 42] And those two things can't be separated, you see. We can be certain in hope only because, and only if, we're living in faith now. We have solid assurance of our inheritance in the eternal city of God to come, as people like Abraham did, only if we have the present demonstration of eternal reality in our lives now, as we draw near to the presence of God himself, above.

And we're doing that today and every day of our lives, as people like Abraham did. But you see, we may draw near, the author tells us, with a full assurance of faith, with even greater confidence, through our great high priest.

Because already, through him, as we'll see in chapter 12, we are drawing near to the eternal Jerusalem, to the very throne of God himself, ourselves, with no need for intermediaries and priests.

intimately, deeply, wonderfully. And that very reality, you see, is what we experience through our faith. That is, through our response to God's word to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ, together, as the community of faith.

The reality of the household of faith now, where we commune with our Lord above, that demonstrates to us the certainty of the future that we have, guaranteed by God's oath, you remember, by that steadfast anchor that has gone through the curtain and links us forever with the world to come.

[17 : 20] And that is what enables us to live for the eternal world to come, for the kingdom of Christ, even now. That is why last time we saw at the end of chapter 10, you see, he is commanding us not to stop meeting together, because it is only our faith, which is nurtured as we meet together under God's word, only our faith, that can assure us of our future inheritance, not our sight, because it is as yet unseen.

So we can't have assurance any other way unless we keep faith, unless we keep drawing near to God through his word. Faith, says Paul to the Romans, comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

So keep on hearing his voice and responding to him. Don't harden your heart, says Hebrews, or you'll stop seeing. You'll stop perceiving the reality of the world to come, of God's promise, and of the world above, and of God's presence now.

You need to keep drawing near through hearing and responding to God's word. Seeing reality comes by hearing God's revelation, the hearing of faith.

And only that will give you any certainty, any assurance in your Christian life. And, indeed, look at verse 3. Only that will give you any understanding of this world, this visible world.

[18 : 48] Because it's by faith, by responding to God's word, that we understand that the universe was created by God's word. That the seen comes only from the unseen.

Now, of course, our world around about us thinks the opposite, as, indeed, did the world of ancient Greece. That this world is the ultimate reality. that everything within this world, this universe, comes from within it, including life itself, which has only evolved by sheer chance.

And so all that matters is this world. That's what our world believes. That's why our world is so full of contradictions. On the one hand, you see, if there's nothing above and beyond this world, if, as John Lennon sang, there's above us only sky, then there's no God, except for the gods of man's own creation, human religion.

So man is ultimate, not God. And, therefore, man is free to act autonomously, with no fear of judgment, to exploit the world, to exploit its resources, to exploit its weaker peoples.

Our selfish ends. But why not, you see, if Professor Dawkins tells us that our genes are selfish, and that that's fine, because there is no reason, there is no purpose in anything.

[20 : 07] But that's hardly led us, has it, as John Lennon wanted us to think, to a world where all the people are living life in peace. That's a truly imaginary thing. And yet, on the other hand, you see, if this world is all there is, and if man is, is just a chance happening, just like all life forms, well, why should man be king at all?

Why not the birds, or the bees, or the koala bears, or for that matter, the grass, or the oceans, or the icebergs? And why not sacrifice human beings in order to save the planet?

That's what some extreme greens want us to do. better for Mother Earth to be saved than all humans to be exterminated by some kind of natural disaster, like a virus or something else. See the contradictions. But Hebrews says, no, this world did not originate itself. This world was made, it was created by the word of God.

The visible world comes from the invisible word. And therefore, of course, it follows, if that is true, that this world can only be explained from outside and beyond itself.

[21 : 24] So you'll never, ever really understand or make sense of this world that you live in, or your own life, or why you exist, or who you are, unless you seek understanding the only way that it can be found.

And that's by listening and responding to the word of God. That's what faith means. Only the revelation of God puts us in touch with reality about the invisible world of God above and about the unseen world that's yet to come, which is the eternal reality.

And therefore, in the light of these things, enabling us to understand the visible world which derives from the eternal world and therefore can only be explained by the eternal world.

That might be something for you to think about if you're not a Christian believer yourself, but you do find yourself struggling to understand the world, to make sense of your own life.

this is saying to you, if you want to understand these things, your own life, this world, everything in it, you need to start by listening to the living word of God.

[22 : 36] Seeing, perceiving reality comes only by hearing, by receiving the revelation from outside this world. And God has been speaking from the very beginning.

And people have been finding that understanding from the very beginning, as this chapter tells us. But now, in these last days, there is no excuse because he has spoken to us in our age in his Son, in Jesus Christ, who himself upholds the whole universe by the word of his power, this is chapter 1, verse 3.

So if that's you and you're trying to make sense of this world and your own life, you need to keep listening, you need to keep coming, hearing the word that can explain the world. But of course, it's very important for those of us who are Christians too because clearly this world is at odds with God's word.

And so there's great pressure for us living today to listen to this world that wants us to return to its way of thinking, that we belong only here, that we should come back and be investing ourselves only here in this life, in this world.

return to the land that you've come out from as it's expressed in verse 15 of Abraham. Whereas God's word is calling us to keep pressing on to where we truly belong, to the heavenly country, the better country, the eternal world, the world to come.

[24 : 02] So there's a great battle for endurance, a battle for faith. But that battle, friends, can be won.

And it has been won by countless believers all down the ages like this great cloud of witnesses in this chapter. Beginning with these three men that are mentioned in verses four to seven, right back at the very dawn, the prehistory in the early pages of Genesis.

These men who responded to God by faith at the start of their lives, who kept on all the way through their lives, right to the very end. And in fact, they've been carefully selected to show us exactly that, the whole of the life of faith that they live with their eyes open to the eternal realities of God because their hearts have been opened to an eternal relationship with God.

And that's what verses four to seven show. That it's by faith that we possess relationship with the unseen eternal God. And that our hearts are open to the eternal person of God himself.

These verses are telling us that it's only by faith, only by responding to the revelation of God that we can seek the eternal invisible God and find his reward.

[25 : 21] And so live with the unseen God above in this world all the days of our lives for the world that's to come. It was Dick Lucas years ago who opened my eyes to see why these three have been selected here.

It answers so clearly the three great questions that run all the way through Hebrews. How do we draw near to God above in the first place? How do we keep going when we've drawn near and had faith in him?

And how do we faith death and judgment in the end? Well, these three men's lives point us to the answer to these crucial questions. Abel and Enoch and Noah.

First of all, Abel, verse four. Abel's life shows us the reality of the commencement of the life of faith. Abel found forgiveness with God. He found acceptance, we're told, righteousness with God early in life because he trusted God as the true redeemer.

And he showed obedient faith by offering the sacrifice that God appointed. God appointed despite there being disregard for God's way even in his own family as we see with Cain who wanted to go his own way, not God's way.

[26 : 33] By faith, Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain. That's the NIV translation which is helpful actually here because although the word used is different, there's clearly a reference back, isn't there, to chapter 9, verse 23 and the better sacrifice which is the very heart of the whole of those central chapters of Hebrews, what it's all about.

And we're being told that Abel partook of that better sacrifice, of the full and final sufficient sacrifice once for all for sins, which is the only way of finding acceptance, the only way of righteousness with God.

And he did it in his case by trusting in God's appointed copy and shadow of these heavenly things that God revealed to him way back in these ancient times. Whereas Cain, by contrast, didn't listen and did it his own way, not God's way.

We're not told any details here but the account in Genesis 4 tells us that Cain just seemed to offer whatever he felt he wanted to offer to God, just some of his things and he expected God to accept it.

Whereas Abel, we're told, offered the first and the best of his flock to God as God consistently commanded to be done. Any Israelite reading those pages of Genesis would immediately know that Abel was the one who was responding to God's revelation.

[28 : 00] Look up Numbers 18 verse 17 later on, you'll see clearly a reference to it. Cain, you see, embraced the spirit of the world but Abel embraced God's spirit through his word to him.

And so by doing that, you see, he embraced from afar off the cross of Jesus Christ for his righteousness. He and all the saints of old were the people of the eternal covenant by faith even though when they lived on earth in their time in history, they lived with all the old covenant shadows and promises.

But it was real faith in God's revealed way and it was costly for Abel to turn his back on the world's way.

In fact, as we know, in the end it cost him his life. But he was commended for his faith as righteous, God accepting him. Because, you see, he found forgiveness with God the only way it can be found, through the blood of God's eternal covenant.

And the Hebrew says his life therefore still speaks to us today and how much more so to us. who find our forgiveness in the once for all completed sacrifice of Christ that we look back on forever through the blood of our Lord Jesus.

[29 : 21] True faith, saving faith begins, commences only when you answer the call of God to find acceptance, to find righteousness, his way and his way alone through faith in his appointed sacrifice which alone brings forgiveness.

righteousness. Not the world's way. You don't find righteousness with God by your own virtue signaling, telling him and telling everybody else, well I do this or I do that.

These days it's I care for the planet, I use ethically sourced things, surely God will find me acceptable in all my ways. Very easy to win the world's approval, isn't it, like that?

God's way involves buying the need to his sacrifice and to the shed blood which alone can atone for your sin against the holy God.

The costly sacrifice of his firstborn, the precious blood of his own. And that's the thing that humbles us, you see. But that's the only way to the commencement of a life of true faith like Abel.

[30 : 37] And then verses five and six, you see, show us the continuation of the life of true faith. Enoch finds fellowship with God. He found access, relationship with God all through his life.

Why? Because he trusted God as the true rewarder. And so he showed obedient faith by seeking God as God desires to be sought.

Despite living in a society that increasingly was looking for its rewards by abandoning God into wickedness and ungodliness and all kinds of things. Read the story in the run-up to the flood.

Enoch, says Genesis chapter five, walked with God.

And he was taken up by passing physical death. But you see, notice here that the focus is on the life he had before he was taken up in fellowship with God. Pleasing God by faith.

Hence verse six, you see, without faith you can't please God but with faith you can all through your life by keeping drawing near to him, by seeking him.

[31 : 42] Note that verse six, that to believe that God really exists means you actually draw near to him. you seek him. Not theoretical knowledge. He rewards those who seek him and who go on doing so even when all the world around is abandoning God and seeking reward not in God but elsewhere through disobedience, through unbelief.

That's the world Enoch inhabited. It's the world we inhabit. But you see, Enoch's appetite for God, his desire for God above and of God's kingdom that was coming, that far outweighed his appetite for this world.

He trusted God as his true rewarder. And he sought him and he was directed by him all through his life. Not by the siren verses of this world promising its rewards.

not like his ancestor Adam, do you remember? Who was seduced into thinking that God is not the rewarder but the thief who wants to take from you the things the world is offering.

And was seduced to seek his reward from the evil one. But instead, like the last Adam, the Lord Jesus, who sought his reward not in the bread of this world, do you remember?

[33 : 02] Even when he was in the desert, desperate and starving and deprived, but seeking his reward from everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord. That was hard for the Lord Jesus.

It was hard for Enoch. It's hard for us. But real faith means seeking God alone as our true rewarder. That's what pleases him.

You see, not shrinking back into the rewards of the world. That's what verse 38 of chapter 10 is saying. God has no pleasure in that. But he does have pleasure when we seek him.

And real faith seeks him still. Even when the world says, oh, he's not there. Even when our experience may make us feel that he's not there. Which is very often, I think, if you're like me.

Just like Habakkuk's day. It's Habakkuk. He quits at the end of chapter 10. Book of Habakkuk begins like this. Oh, Lord, how long will I cry for help and you do not hear me? But Habakkuk there and Enoch here and Moses later on, as we see in verse 27, endured as seeing him who is invisible.

[34 : 15] He walked with God. He walked with God all the way through his life. And he walked with God right into the world to come. Because that was where his reward was.

That's where he was sitting his heart. Not in this world. So notice verse 6 at the end. God rewards those who seek him. Not those who just seek earthly rewards from God.

God. Not those who are just seeking his hand and not his heart. That's a warning, isn't it, for us as Christians? That we're not just seeking God's hand, what he might give us in this world.

That we're not just like the little children who, when their father's been away for two weeks and he opens the door and comes in and wants to hug his children, the first thing they do is rush to his suitcase. Because they know he's brought them back a present.

And all he wants is a hug from his children. I'm not bitter, by the way. But Jesus had a lot to say about that, didn't he?

[35 : 18] Read Matthew chapter 6. Beware. Beware of your expressions of piety not being just seeking the rewards of men, the rewards of this world.

To be seen by the world and rewarded for your giving, for your prayer, for your fasting, and so on. But then you'll have no reward, he says, from your Father in heaven. No, real faith seeks him, the invisible God, and his reward.

And your Father, who sees in secret, when you do that, Jesus says, we'll reward you. Because you're building up treasures not on earth, where they can be destroyed, but on heaven, where they will never be destroyed.

Real faith seeks him. The rewarder himself finds fellowship with him daily, all through life. Drawing near with all of those who call on him, walking with him all through life, and into the unseen world that's still to come.

And that end, of course, is what's highlighted in the last example, in verse 7, in Noah. Because Noah shows us surely the climax of the life of true faith. Noah found a future with God.

[36 : 31] He found acquittal. He found rescue by God through judgment and into the renewed world. Because he trusted in God as the true ruler, and so he showed obedient faith in submitting to him.

As God commanded him to prepare for events as yet unseen. Despite, of course, living in a society that scoffed and mocked him and said judgment will never come.

By faith, Noah, being warned of God, in reverent fear, constructed an ark for the saving of his household. And we see here very explicitly, don't we, what's surely implicit in the story of Abel and Enoch, that God spoke.

This chapter 1 begins, in many times and in many ways to the ancients, and men of faith listened and responded. They obeyed. That's what faith means.

Look at verse 8. By faith, Abraham obeyed God. And Noah obeyed. He actually built the ark. He listened to God's warning about a terrible judgment to come.

[37 : 40] And he followed God's appointed way of rescue through that judgment, despite the utter ridicule of the whole world around him. Because he believed God. He submitted to his command in reverent fear.

That's faith. He obeyed the gospel of God in the face of a world that scoffed and mocked. But do you remember what Jesus said? My true family, my mother and sister and brother, are those who hear the word of God and do it.

And Noah did it. He heeded the warning. And so he condemned the world that didn't. He rejected the call of the world, even when every visible thing seemed to favor the world view of everybody around him.

He heeded the call of God's word. So he and his family were rescued through judgment into the inheritance of a renewed and cleansed earth then.

But far more importantly, even than that, that shadow of the things to come. He was made an heir, we're told, of the righteousness that comes by faith.

[38 : 55] The ultimate promised inheritance that is still as yet unseen. The eternal world to come when the Lord Jesus returns. Noah, being warned by God, acted and found salvation.

And how much more for us in these last days must we heed the warnings, says Hebrews, and not neglect such a great salvation revealed to us.

And submit to God as our true ruler in reverent fear, not shrinking back through disinterest, through drift, through disobedience into a world that is condemned and will be condemned utterly forever.

The whole of Hebrews is full of these warnings. And they're written not to the world outside, but they're written to us in the church. The Holy Spirit, he says, is speaking to us in these last days through these ancient stories.

And Hebrews says we better listen. Because the things unseen, the ultimate judgment which is surely coming to this world is far greater than anything ever seen in that ancient world.

[40 : 06] And real faith that will stand at life's climax in judgment. And don't forget chapter 9, verse 27. Every one of us will face a personal judgment. And in the world's climax of judgment on the last day, the faith that will find rescue and a future in the world to come is a faith that heeds God's warnings, that prepares for that day in reverent fear.

Much less, he says in chapter 12, will we escape if we reject him who warns now from heaven when he shakes not just the earth, but also the heavens on that great day.

So let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe, just like Noah. Because our God is a consuming fire.

He is our ruler. He is our judge. He's also our savior. Because these warnings are given to us that we will avoid his judgment, that we'll find his salvation.

So there's a great challenge, isn't there, to all of us in the church to witness this message today to a godless world, to a scoffing world. And to cherish the ark of salvation that God has in these last days made known and made open to all who will believe in the gospel of his son.

[41 : 31] Our message will, in the end, condemn those who refuse to listen, who refuse to heed God's call, the call of the Savior. But like Noah, we are called to be heralds of righteousness, as Peter calls him.

So that by all means of any, we may save. And as we saw in Hebrews chapter 3 and 4, as long as it's still cold today, the promise of entering his rest still stands.

There's a great rescue in the Lord Jesus Christ. And as long as it's still today, as long as we breathe in this world stands, this is the day of salvation.

Because as Peter tells us, even as he speaks of the flood of Noah and the greater flood of judgment to come, he says, God is patient, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should

reach repentance.

A great challenge for us, friends. To heed the words ourselves with living faith and to proclaim that word to all, to embrace living faith in Jesus.

[42 : 42] And there is in our message great comfort for the world. If they will listen. There's a great message for anyone here who wants to understand the world, to understand yourself and your life and everything.

You can find reality about this creation. But you'll find it through relationship with the creator himself. And that comes through revelation.

It comes through hearing his voice and heeding his voice. That's what faith is. By faith, you will understand that the key to everything is what's unseen.

By faith, you perceive the reality of the unseen eternal world. As by faith, you possess that relationship with the unseen eternal God.

And the faith that promises fellowship with God throughout your life and a future with God beyond judgment. It begins always for everyone.

[43 : 48] Have a place of forgiveness with God. With God's appointed perfect and sufficient sacrifice. which now we have seen for all the world in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So how appropriate it is that we come today as we close our service to this table. Where we come and we say to the Lord in the bread and in the wine, Lord, remember him long ago on the cross dying for our sin.

And we say to the Lord, see the bread, see the wine. Christ proclaimed for me. His the death, mine the life. This is your promise free.

A promise free offered to all who will hear and respond. That's what we're going to do now as we sing together. And as we gather around this great table of the Lord's forgiveness.

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