

# Let's get clear about faith

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Preacher: Dick Lucas

[ 0 : 00 ] There could conceivably be people here tonight who don't realize that your minister, Dr. Willie Phillip, came down to London for five years and was such a blessing to us. And I often feel when I come back here that I want just to repay in a tiny way what he did for us. So we thank God for that, those five years. We'd ask your prayers for the future. Robin's going from us has been fairly sudden and obviously we're looking to fill that gap and the work has to go on. So maybe one or two of you could bear that in mind in your daily prayers that God will lead us to the right man to continue that apostolic succession.

Maybe a Scotsman, maybe an Irishman, maybe a Welshman, maybe an Englishman, who knows. What we want is a Christian and someone with their head screwed on.

Hebrews chapter 11. As I'm reading from the NIV, my page number will be different from yours. But as you know, I think you should know where to find these books already. Except possibly with the exception of the Minor Prophets. They take a little bit longer to find out, don't they? Hebrews chapter 11 verse 1 and three words. Now faith is. Faith is what? Well that's my text and my theme as you've probably seen already is let's get clear about faith or at least a little bit clearer. Hebrews is quite different from other books really in the New Testament and therefore when you come across a very familiar theme like faith and then you turn to Hebrews, it looks on it in a slightly different way and that's I think so fresh and helpful.

Now there are two reasons for choosing this theme of faith this evening. First, because the Cornhill Scotland next week will be studying Hebrews. I shall be teaching it for four mornings and in those four mornings hope to pass on all I know about Hebrews. Well I'm not quite sure if we'll manage that in four mornings but again pray for us in this week ahead. One thing for sure about the letter to the Hebrews is that it's about faith and you can see that of course with chapter 11 in front of you and everybody who's been a Christian and knows their Bible for any length of time will know it's one of the great chapters of the New Testament about the heroes and the heroines of faith.

[ 2 : 45 ] But the faith that Hebrews is talking about is a very distinctive kind of faith and I've called it quite simply persevering faith. That is a faith that lasts. Hebrews is also about a loss of faith and unbelief in the professing church and for the writer to the Hebrews and we don't know who it is, this loss of faith. This loss of faith, this unbelief in the professing church is the definitive mark of apostasy. Perhaps people find Hebrews a little bit embarrassing because it does talk quite a bit about apostasy and it's not a subject we're particularly fond of. It's a solemn theme and it's a solemn reality. The person once known as a keen, convinced, active Christian is now perhaps known as someone who's thrown it all overboard. Now it's no good pretending that that doesn't happen.

Many of you have known that in your own life, you've seen it. A prominent Christian once known for their effectiveness now, all gone. It's an undeniable reality and it's something this letter of Hebrews is dealing with. This obviously happens in tough times particularly. If you've got your Bible opened at chapter 10, you can see the tough times actually on the page before, starting at verse 33 of chapter 10.

Well, this is apparent of the historic situation into which the letter was written. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult or persecution. At other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. Verse 34, you sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property because you yourself knew that you had better and lasting possessions. So, he says, don't throw it all away. Well, we haven't been through tough times like that in my lifetime, I have to say, though it's always tough to be a Christian and continue to the end. And it might get tougher in Britain, mightn't it? And more secular and more antagonistic and your children might find it tougher to live the Christian life than you have. So, Hebrews is rather like a spiritual doctor telling us the secret of a living and a lasting faith. And that's why, although there's a great deal of exposition and

theology in it, it's a very practical book. So, that's one of the reasons that I'm taking Hebrews tonight. I suppose, to be quite frank, my head is so full of it that I haven't got room for anything else. So, you were bound to get Hebrews tonight. Now, my second reason for taking as a theme getting clearer about Hebrews is not because I think the members of the evening congregation at the Tron are unclear. But it's because, like me, you've got many acquaintances and neighbors and friends, have you not, who are in a complete muddle about faith. It's astonishing what a muddle people are in. I won't give example, well, take the example of someone who comes up to you and says, oh, you're so fortunate to have faith, as though it was a kind of ability that you were born with. And, of course, lots of young people growing up today think that science and knowledge, et cetera, made faith in God, faith in Christ and faith in God impossible, as though it had anything whatever to do with it. I was reading the report of the UCCF, led, as you know, by Richard Cunningham today. It's a wonderful movement in every university campus in our country. And somebody reported from Oxford this term that in nearly every student's room, Dawkins' book could be found. I find that rather alarming. Because Dawkins is completely muddled about faith, of course, so he muddles everybody else up.

And therefore, the Christian students in Oxford need to be clear about faith, not just for themselves, but in order to unscramble the confusions and the caricatures and the prejudices of their friends who read Dawkins, haven't read the Bible, and are completely confused about faith. So I take it that we need to be more clear and more clear because of our responsibility to deal with the confusions and the prejudices of friends we meet. And we may only get an occasion very rarely, but let's use it when we get it. All right. So that's why we're looking at this theme. Question one. Where does faith come from? Well, every Christian ought to know the answer from the Apostle Paul. Before we look at Hebrews, where does faith come from? Romans 10, 17. Someone tell me.

[ 7 : 32 ] I hear it. I hear it. Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God, the Word of Christ.

So that's right up Hebrews street. So chapter 11, this is a brilliant thing I discovered. Chapter 11 follows Hebrews chapter 1 to 10. Had you seen that? And what is the foundation of chapter 1 to 10? Well, turn back to Hebrews chapter 1 and you'll soon see. I think the order is very important, you see. We mustn't tear chapter 1 out of the book of Hebrews because it's a favorite. It doesn't stand on its own legs. It stands on the foundation that has been built in the early chapters of the book. So going back to the beginning, well, your pastor has already mentioned this really. Look at chapter 1, verse 1. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. And chapter 1 tells us how God has spoken. We don't live in a silent universe. God has spoken to us. We may speak back to him. And that is the heart of the Christian relationship. You can't have a relationship, can you, unless both sides speak to one another. God starts it all. So, in the past, verse 1, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things. And then a wonderful description of the greatness of the Son through whom he has spoken. Now that's all very natural. There's nothing strange about that, you know, as though

Christianity was quite different from the logic of ordinary life, it's by what people say that we come to trust or distrust them, isn't it? Even more, it's what people say and do or have done that causes us to put our confidence in them. That's going on in America at the moment. I think we should all be quite pleased when the presidential election is over. It seems to go on for years, doesn't it? But what the American people have got to decide is, do I trust this man to be the most powerful man in the world? I wish we could have a vote, because it's going to affect us.

And you will put your vote, you will cast your vote for the man you trust the most, because not only what they say, but what they do and what they have done. What's their record? So what's the record of Christ? He's come to speak, but also to do. Notice verse 3, at the end of it, after he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. So it's interesting. I think that's fascinating, don't you? God sent his son to speak his word. When I ask what was that word, it's what he did. What he did, speaking to us most powerfully, was to die for our sins and to make us acceptable to God. Now I don't know how it is with you. That's how I came to faith. When I was a teenager, I was taken to a scripture union camp in wartime. We had to pick up turnips and that kind of thing to help the war effort. Frankly, how that helped the war effort, I have no idea. And when we got back, the government ordered this. All school kids had to do this. When we got back in the evening, it was a Christian camp. We sat down for prayers, and I think many of us

thought we would have a quiet slumber. But the leader of that camp had a wonderful gift of explaining the word of God. And I sat absolutely gripped, because I'd never heard this before. I'd gone to church. My parents were God-fearing people. We went to church every Sunday. But we never heard the good news of what Christ said and did. And that's how I came to faith. I'd love to hear from you afterwards how you came to faith.

[ 11 : 23 ] But I'm sure in that story, it was when you heard and understood. Not when you took a leap of faith into the dark, but when the light shone from the word of God and the gospel, and you said, I'm going to come out of the darkness into the light. That's the cost of being a Christian.

I have to come out of the dark into the light to be exposed by the Lord Jesus Christ for what I am. Now Hebrews is not so much interested in that first step of faith that I took as a lad of, I think I was 15 or 16. I can't quite remember. But I put my trust in the promises of God and in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's how God began a good work in me all those years ago.

But faith is not, Hebrews is not primarily talking about that first step of faith. It's talking about the faith that goes on until the end. It's interested in whether we go on listening to the word of God so that our faith goes on growing. That's the issue before us.

So, if we don't go on listening, I want you to listen to the warnings. And the warnings are part of this book, and we shall be looking at them this week. And they are really quite serious and alarming warnings. And I'm going to ask you to look with me just at the first warning and the last. All right?

So, what Hebrews is talking about is a faith that goes on, and he knows that that faith won't go on. Just what we were talking about just now, churches and Christians fading away because they cease to listen. Chapter 2 then, and I'll read verses 1 to 4. Now, this is not an evangelistic text.

[ 13 : 05 ] This is written to Christians, professing Christians. We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard so that we do not drift away. Any of you go out in boats on the water? If you do, you'll know how easy it is to drift without even knowing that you're doing it. That's what churches do. That's what Christians do.

For if the message spoken by angels, that's the Old Testament revelation, was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just reward, how much more shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? That is what the Word of God is talking about.

This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him, God also testifying it by signs and wonders. Now, when the book of Hebrews talks about our great salvation, it's talking about the future, the time when we shall be saved from the wrath of God on the last day. And it wants us to be listening to this message about that great salvation all our lives, so that we'll keep on our way to the end.

And it says, if we don't do so, we shan't escape. That message is given to professing Christian people. Verse 3 should not be used as an evangelistic text. It's for us.

That's the first warning. And the final warning is in chapter 12, verse 25. Turn over quickly, if you will. Chapter 12, verse 25. Here's the final warning, saying almost exactly the same, in almost the same words.

[ 14 : 39 ] Notice the difference. We started by being warned about drift. Now drift is becoming rejection.

That's where drift always leads. See to it that you who started a drift do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned on earth, that's Old Testament, how much less will we if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?

I'm going on now. Remember, this is spoken to Christians, and therefore it's spoken to me, and therefore it's spoken to you. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens.

The words once more indicate the removing of what can be shaken, that is created things, so that what cannot be shaken will remain. And so on the last day, the whole universe will be shaken, and all that will remain is God's people whom he has called out, who have continued to believe in him. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and say, worship or serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe for our God as a consuming fire. Now, have you ever noticed that before?

[ 15 : 55 ] The evangelist, like John Chapman, usually addresses the non-believing person, and warns them of the wrath of God. But notice here that the Hebrews is writing to the professing Christian, and warns them of the consuming fire.

That is very distinctive, although it is to be found in the other letters, it is Hebrews that underlines this again and again. So the first warning and the final warning, tell the believer to keep going to the end, because this is a serious matter, and our God is a consuming fire.

Now, I think the defining passage on listening to the word of God in Hebrews is actually to be found in chapter 3. So I'd ask you to turn back, if you will, there. And here we get the picture of the church that Hebrews wants to put before us, and the picture is of the children of Israel in the wilderness. They're on a pilgrimage. By the way, this is the picture of Hebrews all the way through. It's like John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. So here is a picture of the church of God in the Old Testament, going through the wilderness to the promised land.

What is God's message to them that he echoes to us today? Well, look at verse 7. As the Holy Spirit says, by the way, isn't that interesting?

[17:23] The Holy Spirit talks through the scriptures, and in this particular case, it is Psalm 95. Today, if you hear his voice, then harden your hearts. Listen. Going on to verse 12.

We haven't time to look at it all. See to it, brothers. Now he's talking to the people in the first century. That none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. And encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today. Isn't that interesting? So apparently God doesn't trust you to continue for more than 24 hours. So we're to encourage ourselves every day. Will you do that, therefore, as a congregation?

Encourage yourselves. It's not just the pastor's job. We do it to one another. So that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We've come to share in Christ, if we hold firmly to the end, the confidence we had at first.

Do you see? He's talking not simply what you had at first, but holding firmly to the end. So again he repeats, Today if you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts, as they did in the wilderness, in the rebellion.

[18:26] And then come three tremendous questions, beginning who, with whom, and to whom. First, who? Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those whom Moses led out of Egypt?

That is the great redeemed community. All right? Who were they? The professing church of God in the Old Testament. And with whom was he angry for 40 years?

Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? That is 600,000 people. And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest, if not to those who disobeyed?

So we see that they were not able to enter because of their unbelief. So you see, Hebrews is putting faith before us as the essential thing in our lasting, endearing, persevering Christian lives. And if faith is not that, then unbelief will be the name of apostasy. So throughout this letter, the author is saying, please listen.

[19:34] Just turn right to the end of the letter. By the way, the scholars argue, and probably will go on arguing until the second coming, as to whether it's a book, a letter, or a sermon.

Well, you must make up your own mind. What does verse 22 of chapter 13 say? Brothers, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, and the word of exhortation is used in the Acts of the Apostles for a sermon or a homily, so Hebrews must be a sermon, for I've written to you only a short letter, so it also must be a letter.

And it's clearly a book. So it's a book, a sermon, and a letter. And what does he say at the end? Please listen. And when they listen to him, what does he tell them?

Please listen to God. So that's one of the driving thoughts of this remarkable letter. Why weren't they listening?

Well, I think one of the reasons, and we don't have time to go into it, is that they weren't meeting together. Just like Mrs. Delevingne, I remember as my first job, as an assistant, I used to go visiting, and I met Mrs. Delevingne.

[20:48] She was a wonderful Christian lady, in terms of profession, but she was such a wonderful Christian lady that none of the churches were good enough for her. And so she had a service on her own, every Sunday.

It's a strange way, isn't it, of slipping away? To think that none of the churches are good enough for you? So what is the chief need in the churches today?

Chapter 13, verse 7. That will summarize one of the themes of Hebrews. Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God.

I remember my leaders. Do you remember your leaders who first spoke the word of God to you? I hope you held them in affection. I held them in affection, those who spoke the word of me. Of course, they've gone into the world to come long ago, but I owe them a special debt.

And I go on considering the outcome of their way of life, and I imitate their faith, because it was a lasting faith. And it was rooted in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

[ 21 : 56 ] Now, before we leave that point, where does faith come from? It comes from a regular listening to the word of God. Just turn back to our key text in Hebrews 11, and verse 3.

It's quite a complex verse, verse 3. You'll notice that verse 3 talks about two things, the world, the universe, and the word, God's command.

So my version reads like this. By faith we understand that the universe, the world, was formed at God's command by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of what is visible.

It's so fascinating, that, isn't it? Because the scientists today are trying to find in the universe, in the world, the secret of its origin. Where did it all come from? How did it start? And they will never discover the secret.

Because the secret is that the universe started at the word of God. So the word of God is outside the universe. The universe we live in is dependent on the word of God. The word of God, of course, comes from the throne of God.

[ 23 : 05 ] So the question verse 3 sets you is, what are you listening to? Are you listening to the world? And that's the beginning of apostasy. And that's one of the reasons the older denominations have declined.

They become conformed to this world. Or are you listening to the word of God? Now because we live in the world, and this world is talking to us all the time, we can't avoid being influenced by the world.

All the time we're being pressured, aren't we, by the world, to do what the world does, and to believe what the world believes. And if you do that, you'll go to hell. So what does a Christian do? Every day, he leaves this world to go to the throne of God, where there is the source of the word of God, and he listens to what God has to say to him. He goes into the clear air of heaven, and says, Lord, speak to me today, so that I may live in the world according to your word, not according to the standards of the world.

So a vital verse, that three, isn't it? And do meditate on it during this week, if you have time. Right, enough of that. Let's go on to question two. We've asked the question, where does faith come from?

[ 24 : 18 ] And the unequivocal answer of Hebrews, it comes from the word of God, and therefore it isn't enough to have put your faith in the promises of God long ago. The question is, where are you putting your trust now?

And you're going to put your trust in the word of God today, if you're listening to it day by day.

Second question then, where does living faith take us? Now if you ask that question of the letter to the Hebrews, the answer is very simple.

Faith takes us to Jesus Christ. And the whole central part of Hebrews, from chapter 2 or 3, right through to chapter 10, is taken up with a description of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

He is at the center of the letter. You'd expect that. But the description of Jesus in Hebrews is an almost unique one, although Jesus himself talked about his high priesthood prayer in John chapter 17.

The picture is of Jesus and his sacrifice as a high priest. Now in case you don't know about the high priest in the Old Testament, and there may be people here who don't, younger people, let me very quickly describe what happened every year in Judaism.

[ 25 : 24 ] Every year the high priest, representing the whole of Israel, went into the temple, stood before the curtain which hid the Holy of Holies, taking the blood of the sacrifice that they had made.

He went through that curtain and sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat and all the people outside tremble because they saw him as being in the presence of God.

Those of you who are older will remember golden bells, the scripture in the hymn book. Golden bells were sown on the bottom of the cassock of the high priest and as he was within the Holy of Holies, those bells would tingle away and all the people outside will say, oh that's good, he's still alive.

Then he would come out having renewed the covenant of the people of Israel with their God for another twelve months. And every twelve months he would do the same. And the curtain remained up as much as to say the way is not yet open.

That's what the high priest did every year. Now what this letter is saying very shortly is this, and of course this is almost too short, but nevertheless this is what it's saying, is that Christ has fulfilled all that.

[ 26 : 31 ] He has gone into heaven by virtue of his sacrifice into the presence of God and he's opened the way for everybody to come all the time, not just year by year renewing the covenant, renewing the covenant forever.

So what has happened is that Jesus has opened the way and therefore we have a God who's wonderfully approachable. That's the good news of the Bible, isn't it? That God is wonderfully approachable and no more ritual is needed anymore.

Look at chapter 10 verse 19. You've got it open in front of you. Chapter 10 verse 19. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, I wouldn't on my own, would I?

Because I'm a sinner. By a new and living way, open to us through the curtain, that is his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.

That's where faith takes us. Faith takes us right into the presence of God. Faith leads me and should be leading you every day of your life to visit the King in heaven, to turn to his throne of grace daily, regularly, even moment by moment, because you've got a wonderfully approachable God.

[ 27 : 49 ] And that's all due to our Lord Jesus Christ. What does that actually mean that I come into the presence of God? Well, Hebrews goes further, and I must say this really is something that one's mind can hardly take in.

Look at chapter 12 verse 22. When you come to the throne of grace, what do you come to? Well, you come to God. You come to the Lord Jesus Christ at his right hand.

But Hebrews wants to say more. Verse 22, chapter 12. You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, already, to the city of the living God.

You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

So, in coming to the throne of grace every day, I actually come into heaven. I anticipate the future. I'm already in touch with the heavenly Jerusalem.

[ 28 : 59 ] I'm already in touch with the thousands of angels, even though I cannot see them. So, the faith that draws near daily to God keeps me anticipating the life of the world to come and stops me slipping back into worldliness and making this world's limitations my horizon.

And that's what Hebrews calls apostasy. Now then, look at chapter 11, verse 1, and you'll see how our author brings these two things together. He says, Now, faith is being sure of what we hope for, that is the future, and certain of what we do not see.

The two things are brought together as two sides of one central thing. As I come close to the God I cannot see through Jesus Christ, I become assured of my future hope.

And that's why those people who are regularly drawing near to God in their prayers, who know that they're accepted by the Lord and are constantly in touch with Him through Jesus Christ, have an assurance of the life of the world to come.

Whereas if I cease to draw near to God, I lose my assurance of the future. Question two then, where does faith lead us?

[ 30 : 19 ] It leads us to heaven. And now we're face to face with the picture that Hebrews is giving us all the time. Are we going forward to the promised land by faith and obedience? Or are we slipping back to Egypt, to the world?

That's the picture that he gives us all the way through the letter. I'm either going forward or I'm slipping back. Question three, very briefly. Where is faith modeled?

That's very important, isn't it? Because most things in life are caught as well as taught. So, I need to see faith modeled if I'm to follow Christ properly.

I need to see people who've gone before me like these leaders talked about in chapter 12. And it's very interesting that the models that Hebrews gives us in chapter 11 are the Old Testament saints. You wouldn't expect that, would you? I can't give you all the reasons for that, but I think it's very striking. And I'm just going to look at one because of our time, and that's Abraham. So, turn to Abraham that was read to us just now, and what do we see about Abraham?

[ 31 : 29 ] Well, the striking thing about Abraham on his journey is that he refuses to settle down in this world because, verse 10 of chapter 11, you've got verse 10, he was looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God.

I'm not sure that that's very common amongst us today. We've been frightened off this, haven't we, by the Marxists who talk about pie in the sky. We've been laughed at because we've been certain of heaven.

But Abraham, apparently, was looking forward to it. And therefore, he set his eyes on the future and looked, therefore, at verses 14, 15, and 16, which are so important.

As you get to know Hebrews, you begin to notice the verses that are really important. Verse 14, people who say such things show that they're looking for a country of their own, that is, the future. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they're longing for a better country. Do you see? Abraham could have gone back to the world from which he came, but he didn't.

[ 32 : 35 ] That's the message of Hebrews right through the book. Are you pressing on to the world to come, or are you being drawn back to the world from which you were redeemed? That's apostasy. And so exactly the same thing is said about Moses.

The key phrase about Moses is there at the beginning of verse 27. In a sense, that's the heart of what is said about Moses. By faith, he left Egypt.

It was the place he was educated. It's the place where he had all his riches. It's the place that he might have wanted to stay. He could easily have said, if I stay here I could influence the children of Israel and help them.

But no, by faith he left it and never went back. That's the pattern in Hebrews. The Christian has a call from God in principle to leave the world, the godless world, and go on pilgrimage to the world to come.

And so there's a great tug of war, a battle, and you get that, don't you, in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Either we go forward through a faith that is nourished by the word of God daily, or we turn back to the place we originally came from, which is this godless world.

[ 33 : 49 ] And we turn to these ancient warriors, men and women, to learn how to do it. But of course the greatest model of all is the Lord Jesus, and we'll finish by looking at chapter 12, 1 to 3.

I was going to suggest we read it together, because some of you have got the ESV, I've got the NIV, and one or two of you are very clever ones, have probably got a New Testament, a Greek New Testament in front of you.

So we won't read it together, because we might be a bit muddled. I'll read it. Chapter 12, 1 to 3, Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, all these great ones of the past, let's throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, yes it does, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the model, that is the author of your faith, he began it all, and the perfecter of your faith, he will nourish it till the end, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, that is what the world threw at him, scorning its disgrace and shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

And so, Christian, consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you don't grow weary and lose heart. Well, I wonder if you are growing weary.

[ 35 : 17 ] Sometimes we do, don't we? Every Christian sometimes loses heart. And when we lose heart, we're very open, aren't we, to the temptation to look back to the world to find our support?

Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith. He's the real model. And so, Hebrews 11, Hebrews is telling us that the faith we need to continue to the end is the faith modeled to us by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who put up with an immense amount of opposition for the joy that was set before him.

I somehow don't think we hear this very often today. We're rather shy about thinking of heaven and the future. But if you don't think about the future and meditate on where you're going, you'll never

get there.

So let's pray. Heavenly Father, we long to keep our eyes upon Jesus and to know where we're going and to set that mark before us.

We long not to slip back into that old world from which you redeemed us. And so we pray for that lasting, persevering faith that marked out the heroes of old.

[ 36 : 43 ] Forgive us that we so often stumble and grow weary on the way, but refresh us today and help every one of us to refresh each other.

We know how much we need the help of our brothers and sisters, so grant that we may both give it and receive it, that together we may reach the goal.

And we ask it for the glory of our Savior Jesus Christ who went before us. Amen.