

# Dying in Faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if we could, this morning, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in the letter to the Hebrews.

Hebrews chapter 11, page 1211. Hebrews chapter 11, and if you read again at verse 13. Hebrews 11 at verse 13.

Where we're told, Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Last Sunday evening, we were considering the words we were just singing.

When I was down in Borg, we were looking at Psalm 1. And we saw that Psalm 1, it presents to us two types of people in this world. Because, well, we may look at our modern world and we may think that there are many different types of people with many different labels.

[ 1 : 34 ] And we may place them in all sorts of categories. We might place them in categories according to their gender, their nationality, their age, their wealth, their sexuality, their location, or even their education.

We might put people into all sorts of categories. But the reality is that when the Lord looks at us, he sees that there are only two types of people in this world. And that's because our Bible tells us that man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

And when the Lord looks at our hearts, he only sees two types of people. And these two different types of people, they're going in two different directions. And they will have two different outcomes. But more than that, Psalm 1, it reminds us that these two different types of people, they're to be found in church. Because if there are only two types of people in the world, then there are only two types of people in church.

And Psalm 1, you could say, it's the churchgoer's Psalm. Because it reminds us that there are only two types of people in church. There are only two types of churchgoer.

[ 2 : 42 ] And Psalm 1 tells us that these people in church, they are either blessed or they are cursed. They are in Christ or they are in Adam.

They are saved or they're in sin. They're redeemed or they're in ruin. They are holy or they are hellbound. And so, my friend, the reality is there are only two types of people in this world.

And although Psalm 1 reminds us that there are only two types of people who come to church, I want us to see that these verses in Hebrews 11, they remind us that there are only two types of people who die.

Those who die with faith in Jesus Christ and those who die without faith in Jesus Christ. And the solemn reality is we will be one or the other.

Because you will either die in faith or you will die without faith. There's no middle ground. There's no fence to cling to. There's no righteousness to present before God.

[ 3 : 50 ] But as we've said before, Hebrews 11, it's all about answering this question. What does it mean to have faith in Jesus Christ? And you know, this question, it was being asked because the letter to the Hebrews, it was written to people who believed in God, yes.

But they were steeped in tradition. They were religious people. They attended all their religious gatherings. They knew their Bible. But they still didn't have saving faith in Jesus Christ.

And this letter was written to remind these people that belief in the existence of God and holding on to tradition and attending religious gatherings and knowing your Bible, they were being told that none of these things will get you into heaven.

Because what you need is wholehearted commitment to Jesus Christ. You need to see that your only hope in life and in death is Jesus Christ. Because as the Bible clearly reminds us, there is no other name under heaven.

By which we must be saved other than the name of Jesus Christ. And you know, this message, it's so relevant to us as a congregation. Because there are far too many of you who are in here this morning.

[ 5 : 04 ] And you are like the people described in this passage. You believe in the existence of God. You might be steeped in tradition. You know your Bible. You were brought up with it.

You look religious today. But you still don't have saving faith in Jesus Christ. You're still not saved. But what you're being reminded this morning is that there are only two types of people in church. And there are only two types of people who die. And you need to die in faith. You need to die in faith. But you know, when you read these verses, it seems as if the writer to the Hebrews, he's taking a little breather from this list of people of faith.

Because as he's gone through the list, he's considered Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and then Sarah. But in these verses, there seems to be this little interlude.

Where the writer to the Hebrews reminds us that these people, they all died in faith. They all died with their faith and their hope in Jesus Christ as their saviour.

[ 6 : 12 ] And of course, the implication of that statement in verse 13 is, how will you die? That's what's being asked here.

How will you die? Will you die with your faith in Jesus Christ? Or will you die without faith in Jesus Christ? And you know, I think it's safe to say that everyone in here today, they want to die with their faith in Jesus Christ.

Or else, why are you here this morning? Why are you in church? Unless you want to know how to die in faith. And so how do you die in faith?

Well, from the example of those we're presented with here, who died in faith, we see that they died in faith by leaning upon a promise, by living as a pilgrim, and by looking towards a preparation.

How do you die in faith? You die leaning upon a promise, living as a pilgrim, and looking towards a preparation. And so let's look at this this morning.

[ 7 : 21 ] How do you die in faith? First of all, you die leaning upon a promise. Now look at verse 13. It says, These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Now as we said, when we come to these verses, it seems that the writer of the Hebrews, he's just taking a little breather from the list of people of faith. But since the beginning of the chapter, this chapter of faith, we've been confronted with person after person who had faith.

We're confronted with Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Sarah. And we're told that they all lived in faith, and then they all died in faith. And they lived in faith, and they died in faith because they were leaning upon a promise.

But we're told that even though they lived in faith, and died in faith, they didn't receive the things promised. They didn't see the promise being fulfilled.

They only saw signs and shadows of the promise. They only saw the promise, as it says there, from afar. They saw the promise in the distance. They knew that it would be fulfilled in the distant future.

[ 8 : 36 ] But by faith, we're told that they greeted this promise. They welcomed this promise. In fact, it's a much stronger word than that. It carries with it the idea of longing to see someone.

Now, we all know what that's like. Someone has been away from home for a while, whether on holiday, or they're offshore, or they're just living away on the mainland. And while they're away, and while they're far off somewhere, you miss them, you look forward to seeing them again.

You look forward to them coming home. And as you look forward to them, your heart is just bursting with joy, and excitement, and emotion at the prospect of their arrival. And you know, that's what's being described here.

That emotion. That those who lived and died in faith, although they didn't see the things promised, and they saw that it was promised in the distance, they knew that it was going to be fulfilled.

And they longed to see it being fulfilled. They looked forward to seeing it being fulfilled. And they lived every day of their lives, right up until their last, looking to the promise, and leaning upon the promise.

[ 9 : 48 ] The question we need to ask is, well, what was the promise? What was the promise that they leaned upon, both in life and in death?

What was the promise that enabled these men and women to live and die in faith? What was the promise that gave to them this hope and this assurance that their eternal well-being would be safe

and secure?

What was the promise? The promise was the promise that was given way back in the Garden of Eden. You remember that when Adam and Eve had listened to Satan, they listened to the serpent and they disobeyed the Lord and sin entered into the world.

And just before the Lord drove Adam and Eve out to the garden, the Lord sent them out with this promise, that the seed of the woman will come and crush the head of the serpent.

The seed of the woman will come and crush the head of the serpent. And that promise in Genesis 3, that was the promise that enabled Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, and many others after them.

[10:59] It was that promise that they leaned upon in life and in death. And you know, what's remarkable is that the story of the Bible from Genesis right through to Revelation, it's all about this promised seed from Genesis 3.

This promised seed who's going to come and crush the head of the serpent. Because when you read the Bible, as the story progresses through all the pages and the chapters and the books, and ultimately through all these generations of history, the Bible follows this genealogy, this lineage. It follows the story of the seed of the woman. And that's why you have these key moments in the Bible, where the Lord's promised seed is going to appear.

Abraham was promised, in your seed, all the nations of the earth are going to be blessed. The seed of the woman, the Lord said, is going to be a direct descendant of Abraham.

And then later on, you have King David, 2,000 years after Abraham, and the Lord is still affirming that this promised seed will appear. And to David, the Lord said, I will set up your seed after you.

[12:09] I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. And when you trace the seed of the woman from Genesis 3 all the way through the Old Testament, you come to the Gospel of Matthew.

And Matthew begins his Gospel with the words, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. And what we see is that from the outset of Matthew's Gospel, Matthew is telling us that Jesus Christ, he is the seed of the woman.

He is the one who has come to crush the head of the serpent. But as we were told in Genesis 3, the only way for the woman, the seed of the woman to crush the head of the serpent is for the seed of the woman to be bruised.

And that's how the promise about the seed of the woman is fulfilled. Jesus is crucified on a Roman cross. He's wounded for our transgressions. He's bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement he received, it's what brings us peace. But more than that, Jesus is not only obedient unto death, he is highly exalted from the dead so that when the angels appear at the tomb of Jesus, they are proclaiming he is not here for he is risen.

[13:25] And you know, although they never saw the promise being fulfilled, although they weren't present when it happened, although they didn't witness the crushing of the serpent at the cross, although they didn't see the empty tomb, we're told that Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah and many others after them, they all lived in faith and they all died in faith because they were leaning upon this promise.

And my friend, what is true about them can be true about you. Because like them, here in 2018, like them, you never saw the promise being fulfilled.

You weren't present at the cross. You didn't witness the crushing of the serpent. You haven't seen the empty tomb. But your Bible, which is an accurate account of the promise being fulfilled, your Bible, it invites you to lean upon this promise with all your heart.

Because the amazing thing about this promise is that those who look to it and those who lean upon it, they will be saved by it. And I say that because those in the Old Testament, they all looked forward to this promise.

promise. And we who are in this 21st century, we look back to the promise being fulfilled. They looked forward to the cross and the empty tomb. We look back to the cross and the empty tomb.

[14:55] And it's not that those in the Old Testament were saved by works and we are somehow saved by faith. That's not it at all. And that's what the writer to the Hebrews is actually stressing to us.

That we can only be saved by faith alone. Faith in this promised seed. The promised Saviour Jesus Christ. You know my friend, this is the wonder of it.

Anyone can be saved. Anyone can be saved. But they can only be saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

There's no other way to be saved. There's no other way to have your sins forgiven. There's no other access to God. There's no other entry point into heaven. Except by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

We can only be saved by looking to Jesus and leaning upon the promise of his salvation both in life and in death. And so we're asking the question this morning, how do you die in faith?

[16:00] we die leaning upon a promise. The promise that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of sinners. But secondly, we must die in faith by living as a pilgrim.

So leaning upon a promise and living as a pilgrim. We die in faith by living as a pilgrim. Read again in verse 13.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and pilgrims or exiles on the earth.

For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. I'm sure that many of you have read John Bunyan's classic book *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

If you haven't read it before or if you haven't read it for a while, I'd always encourage you to read it because next to the Bible *The Pilgrim's Progress* is one of the best books to read and to enjoy.

[17:09] And it was Spurgeon, he was a minister in the 19th century in London. He encouraged, he always encouraged his congregation to read *The Pilgrim's Progress* at least once a year. And he said that in doing so you will be reminded of where you have come from where you are at and where you are going as you journey through life.

And as many of you know *The Pilgrim's Progress* is about a man who came to know the Lord by reading his Bible. And the whole story it's about this man who's on a journey, he's on a pilgrimage. But what often strikes me about *The Pilgrim's Progress* when you read it is that when the main character, when he meets someone new and they ask him well what's your name?

he would often say at first my name was Graceless but now my name is Christian. I have come from the city of destruction and I am going to Mount Zion.

I am a pilgrim and I am going to the celestial city. It's a beautiful statement of faith and it's often repeated throughout the story of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

At first I was called Graceless but now my name is Christian. I have come from the city of destruction. I am going to Mount Zion. I am a pilgrim. I am going to the celestial city.

[18:29] And of course that confession of faith from Christian it's the confession of faith of all Christians. It's the confession of faith for every pilgrim who is travelling towards the celestial city.

And it was the confession of faith of those who are mentioned here in Hebrews 11. because we are told that when they died in faith they died not only leaning upon the promise of the saviour but they died having lived their lives as strangers and pilgrims in this world.

And that description strangers and pilgrims it's so telling of how they lived their life because they didn't view this world as home. They saw that they were only visitors.

They were only passing through. And they knew that everything they had it was temporary. It wasn't forever. It wasn't permanent. But even more than that as pilgrims they often spoke about their home.

They often spoke about where they were going and what it will be like when they get there. And that's what we're told in verse 14 that they acknowledged that they didn't belong here. They confessed that they had a homeland elsewhere.

[19:45] and their life showed that because they professed to be different to those who were comfortable and settled in this world. And you know that's what makes the difference between someone who lives and dies in faith and someone who lives and dies without faith.

because the person who lives and dies without faith they die with the realisation that everything they had and everything they lived for and everything they achieved and everything they gained and every comfort that they had accumulated in this world at death they realised that it was all empty. It was all vanity. It had no eternal value whatsoever. But for the person who lives and dies in faith they die with the assurance and the confession that the best is yet to come.

The best is yet to come. You know one commentator he makes the statement true faith is never invisible because it calls us to confess where our confidence lies both in speech and in lifestyle.

True faith is never invisible because it calls us to confess where our confidence lies both in speech and in lifestyle. And you know this is so relevant for us because if you want to die in faith you have to live as a pilgrim.

[ 21 : 15 ] You must live your life knowing that you're only passing through that this world is temporary it's not forever it's not permanent but you know all too often we get so caught up in the moment and we become so attached to this world and of course we're to enjoy life because life is a gift.

All the things we receive in life they're gifts given to us from the hand of the Lord but the Bible reminds us again and again this is not our home this world is not our home because true faith leans upon the promise and true faith lives as a pilgrim.

True faith lives life with an eternal perspective. But you know true faith it also confesses that you live life with an eternal perspective.

True faith confesses this world is not my home I'm just a passing through. You know they were the words of Jim Reeves many of you will have heard of him maybe listen to him he's a country singer a Christian country singer from the 1950s and he wrote many songs about his love for Jesus and his desire to get to heaven and there's one thing about Jim Reeves he was a man who lived and died by faith in fact he died suddenly in 1964 he died in a plane crash at the age of only 40 but the confession of faith from Jim Reeves was this world is not my home I'm only passing through my treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue the angels beckon me from heaven's open door and I can't feel at home in this world anymore and he goes on to say oh lord you know I have no friend like you if heaven's not my home then lord what will I do the angels beckon me from heaven's open door and I can't feel at home in this world anymore my friend is that your testimony can you say that are you willing to confess and profess today this world is not my home

I'm just passing through but you know the evidence that you're living by faith is that you're not only leaning upon a promise and living as a pilgrim you're also looking towards a preparation and that's what we see lastly because we're asking this question how do you die in faith and we've said that we must die leaning upon a promise living as a pilgrim and looking towards a preparation so looking towards a preparation we'll read again in verse 13 these all died in faith not having received the things promised but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth for people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland if they had been thinking of that homeland from which they had gone out they would have had opportunity to return but as it is they desire a better country that is a heavenly one therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared for them a city and you know reading these words it certainly ties in with

[ 24 : 47 ] Christian's confession in the pilgrim's progress at first I was called graceless but now my name is Christian I've come from the city of destruction I'm going to Mount Zion I'm a Christian I'm going to the celestial city and as we said that's the confession of every Christian pilgrim and that's what we read here about those who died in faith they were looking forward towards a city the celestial city but we're told in verse 15 that things could have been so different if they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out they would have had opportunity to return and what we're being told here is that if they had been thinking about where they had come from if they had been thinking about the city of destruction they would have turned back if their mind had been focused upon and consumed by the world and all the things of the world then the pool of the world would have taken every opportunity to take them back and you know my friend let's never forget that the reality is there's a battle for your soul and the devil wants you to stay in the city of destruction and he will promise you all the happiness and all the security and all the comforts and all the entertainment that this world can offer you but it's all a lie it's all a lie and it's a lie that will lead you all the way to hell but this bible that's open before you it's telling you that Jesus speaks to you on its pages and he's calling you to come to him by faith and enter the celestial city and you know the choice is simple persevere towards the celestial city through commitment to Jesus

Christ by faith or turn back go to the city of destruction and stay there if that's what you want Jesus will say have it but you know verse 16 we're told that for those who lean upon the promise those who live as a pilgrim those who cling to Jesus Christ they flee the city of destruction they don't look back when you read the opening chapter in pilgrim's progress how does pilgrim how does Christian leave the city of destruction he leaves with his fingers in his ears he leaves not wanting to hear anything of the city of destruction and that's what it's like for every Christian they don't look back

they look forward towards this preparation and that's what it says in verse 16 but as it is they desire a better country that is a heavenly one therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared for them a city those who look forward to the celestial city they know that in this world which is not their home they know that the

Lord is preparing for them a city a city with many mansions is that not how Jesus described it to his disciples even though the disciples they were troubled as to why Jesus had to go to the cross and yet Jesus says to them in John 14 let not your heart be troubled you believe in God believe also in me in my father's house are many mansions if it were not so I would have told you I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also and you know what's fascinating is that we often read the opening words of John 14 at the funeral of a Christian because these words they remind us the words of Jesus they remind us so clearly of the promise that Jesus makes to everyone who puts their trust in him the promise that

Jesus is preparing a place for his people and in this world he is preparing them for that place and that when they die in faith he will bring them home to glory to be with himself and all this is possible all this is possible says Jesus as he went on in John 14 it's possible why because I am the way the truth and the life and no man comes to the father except through me my friend this is a wonderful promise to those who live and die in faith it's a wonderful promise being held out to us but the question Hebrews 11 is asking us today is how will you die how will you die you might think I'm morbid but you know this is reality we are only passing through our days are all numbered how will you die will you die with your faith in Jesus

Christ or will you die without faith in Jesus Christ and surely surely you want to die with your faith in Jesus Christ because why are you here why do you sit here week by week why do you come to church unless you want to know how to die in faith and this passage it's telling us this morning how to die in faith you die in faith by leaning upon a promise by living as a pilgrim and by looking towards a preparation my dear unconverted friends sitting here today when your time comes whenever that will be please please please make sure that you die with your faith firmly fixed in

[ 31 : 17 ] Jesus Christ because he is our only hope in life and in death may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh Lord our gracious God we have thanks to thee for the wonder of the gospel that it reminds us that when we die in faith that Jesus is one who has prepared for us a city a city that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God and help us then we pray to live this life to live it realizing that we are only passing through and to keep our eyes firmly fixed upon Jesus for he is the author and he will remain the finisher of our faith bless us Lord we ask thee speak to those who are out of Christ oh Lord we ask thee that thou wouldst awaken them and cause them to seek thy face that they would realize the urgency and their need to be saved bless us then we plead keep us this day the Lord's day help us to rest in it help us to enjoy it for this is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it go before us we ask and do us good for Jesus sake

Amen we shall bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 107 Psalm 107 it's on page 382 in the blue psalm book Psalm 107 in this psalm it calls us to praise God and in this psalm there are testimonies of people who have been saved and in the opening verses it's describing how they were saved they were brought from the desert desert's pathless way and they were made to walk towards the city where they might abide and then in verse 8 there's this plea for everyone reading and singing this psalm that we would praise the

Lord for his works of salvation so praise God for he is good for still his mercy's lasting be let God's redeemed say so whom he from the enemies hand did free and gather them out of the lands from north south east and west they strayed in deserts pathless way no city found to rest so we'll sing psalm 107 from the beginning down to the verse marked 8 to God's praise is good for still his mercy's lasting be let wine he saiyan is and west it's written testers pop them free no city come to rest for birth of hunger in them their soul and strength and praise they cry unto the Lord and he them free from their distress and also in our way to all that right is he did die that they might to a city go where they might abide oh amen to the Lord would give praise for his goodness there and for his works of wonder done unto the sons of men the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more amen