

Walking by Faith – Walking With God

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By the time we get to chapter 10 the writer of Hebrews has talked about Jesus as:

- The exact representation of God; the radiance of His glory, the exact imprint of His nature
- The one through whom everything that exists was created and the one who upholds the universe by the word of His power
- The Son of God who is seated at the right hand of the Father and who is crowned with glory and honour
- Our High Priest who has offered His own blood to pay the price for our sins once and for all
- Our High Priest who has suffered and has been tempted in every way as we are – He knows our weaknesses
- A High Priest who has given us a great salvation that is the answer for all of those weaknesses

He has talked about this great salvation we have:

- There is a new covenant in the blood of Jesus in which His law is written on our hearts, in which we all know the Father and a covenant where our sins are remembered no more
- It is a better covenant that has better promises
- There is a rest for us to enter into with this covenant – there are promises, an inheritance on offer. They are to be received in faith and patience
- Therefore, as those who are receiving this great salvation, we are to imitate those (Hebrews 11) who through faith and patience received the promises

He has also warned that we should not neglect this great salvation

- By having an evil, unbelieving heart
- By disobedience
- By drifting away from what we have heard

- By not holding fast our confidence and our boasting in hope, our confession – failing to hold this firm to the end, failing to endure through trials
- By being sluggish
- By failing to respond in faith to the promise that comes with this salvation

He warns that failing to be those who have faith and patience:

- Can lead us to falling away from the living God (not losing salvation but we can fall away from the life and blessing that is part of the heavenly calling)
- Can lead to us failing to reach the rest that is promised
- Can lead to us losing our inheritance (not our salvation but some of that which accompanies this great salvation)

From chapter 10 onwards the writer of Hebrews begins to apply all of this to encourage those who are saved to walk by faith.

Chapter 10 is a sort of high point in all that He has said so far. It has the some of most powerful encouragements as well as some of the strongest warnings.

Heb 10:19–12:3

¹⁹Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

²⁶For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ²⁸Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the

blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

³²Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. ³³Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

³⁵So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. ³⁶You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. ³⁷For in just a very little while,

"He who is coming will come and will not delay.

³⁸ But my righteous one will live by faith.
And if he shrinks back,
I will not be pleased with him."

³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

By Faith

11 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. ²This is what the ancients were commended for.

³By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

⁴By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

⁵By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

⁷By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

It is faith that pleases God.

This is what “the ancients were commended for.”

Able was commended because he offered his sacrifice in faith.

- He pleased God

What was different to his sacrifice and Cain’s?

- I think it was because the desire of faith is to please God
- It is not about doing something right in order to get some response from God

That would be approaching God on the basis of our work and expecting / hoping that it will be good enough for us to get what we want

- Faith does not do that
- It puts no trust in our works
- and it does not approach God transactionally
- It simply wants to please God.

The true sacrifice in Able’s actions that pleased God was what was in his heart:

- his meekness,
- his yieldedness before God
- His desire to please God

That is what Faith looks like.

Consider Enoch in this regard.

Heb 11:5

By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, **he was commended as one who pleased God.**

Ge 5:21–24

²¹ When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. ²² Enoch **walked with God** after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch **walked with God**, and he was not, for God took him.

The lesson here is not that if we can be like Enoch then we could also get what He got.

That was a unique aspect of his inheritance.

God does, however, create an exclamation mark in history to make a point

- He is showing us what pleases Him! This what faith looks like
- it is walking with God
- Faith pleases God because it is an approach to God that desires to please Him
- Faith pleases God because it is focused on Him, it seeks Him

Faith pleases God because it is **an attitude of heart, a posture in life of walking with Him**

Faith is seeking God and believing Him (Heb 11:6):

- it is approaching Him as the initiator of everything
- Faith does simply begin with God,
 - it seeks God who **is the beginning** of everything
 - with a desire to yield to Him in every way,
 - whatever that is
 - It seeks Him alone
 - There is an exclusivity to faith
 - It puts aside everything else

- Faith seeks God as the one who is working out everything that He began
 - and it seeks to work with him in that
- There is a meekness in faith
 - a lying aside of our agenda,
 - a ceasing from reliance on or trusting in our works
 - and embracing and aligning ourselves with God's agenda
 - and trusting in Him.

This pleases God

In the context of this way of approaching God, by faith:

- We have a peace with God
- We also have an assurance and freedom with Him and we are confident that we can bring our petitions, etc. before Him.
- But there is a lack of striving or negotiating in that. There is:
 - A purposeful laying aside of our agenda and will
 - and a desire for God's agenda and will
 - and nothing else
 - Because our heart is for God alone
 - Because our heart is to please Him

This is place of rest from our own works

- This is not passivity or inactivity
- **but there is a deep seated, profound rest in God that comes from:**
 - believing Him,
 - trusting Him completely
 - Purposefully laying aside our agendas
 - Refusing to begin with ourselves
 - Seeking to know Him, and His will in everything

- and aligning our every thought, emotion and action with who He is,
- and what His will is

Jesus gave us the supreme example of how to live this way.

This is what I think He is calling us to in **Mt 11:25–30**

²⁵ At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you **rest**. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, **for I am gentle (meek) and lowly in heart**, and you will find **rest** for your souls. ³⁰ For **my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**”

This is the way we walk with God

This is the way we walk by faith as His righteous ones

This is where we find rest

Let us go back to one of the ‘cloud of witnesses’ spoken of in Hebrews 11 - Noah

Ge 6:9–13

⁹ These are the generations of Noah. **Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.** ¹⁰ And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Noah also walked with God – He was a man of faith.

- He held fast to his confession in the midst of a wicked generation.
- He was righteous and blameless in his generation.

Faith behaves righteously.

- Being blameless is about having all our affairs with God in order
- Working with Him to take out of our lives the things He does not want and putting those things into our lives that He does want
- Faith will also stand its ground in the face of unrighteousness
- It will persevere and endure the way Noah did in the face of opposition, persecution...

Faith makes an impact through a lifestyle that is radically and obviously different to the ways of the age we live in

Faith will show up in a lifestyle that is aligned with God:

- With Who He is
- With His ways
- With His will and work in us and in the world

Faith is something that matures, is perfected over time.

Abraham is a prime example of this in scripture

Heb 11:8-12

⁸ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

¹¹ By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. ¹² And so from this one man, and he as good as

dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

Ge 15:1–6

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”² But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”³ And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.”⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.”⁵ And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”⁶ **And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.**

Ge 17:1–3

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty El Shaddai); **walk before me, and be blameless,**² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”³ Then Abram fell on his face.

God could have said to Abraham, “Walk by faith,” because that really is the same thing as walking before God and being blameless.

Walking before God implies that:

- We want to see His face – we seek Him
- We want to hear and respond to His word
- We want to hear the directions He gives
- We believe Him
- We trust in Him
- There is no one else we want
- There is no one else we trust

So, in our walking – in the way we live life:

- We stay where we can see His face
- We keep our fellowship with Him intact
- We walk in a way that is blameless before God
- Faith behaves righteously
 - This does not imply sinless perfection
 - It is about keeping our fellowship with God intact
 - This is the focus of John's first epistle
- We will also lay aside our agenda because we cannot walk with God and hold onto our agenda

This is the way of faith that pleases God

As Abraham's faith matures this way of walking before God gets clearer and clearer in His life.

- He leaves behind any thought of taking matters into his own hands, as he did by fathering Ishmael.
- Paul uses this as a way to teach the Galatians the difference between that which is born of the flesh and that which is born of the Spirit.
- The son of the promise is born by faith
- because the promises are born by trusting in God who is faithful to fulfil His promises (not in the works of the flesh)
- Abraham received this by walking in faith
- By walking before God and being blameless

Let us summarise:

Faith seeks God alone and puts aside everything else

Faith seeks God in order to please Him – without any other agenda

Faith believes God – it trusts Him completely

Faith seeks God's initiative and work in every context – it desires nothing other than this

Faith does not begin with or focus on our own agenda

Faith is an attitude of heart, a posture in life, of walking with Him

Faith is meek – yielded before God and ready to walk with Him, on His terms, according to who He is, His ways and His agenda

Faith behaves righteously and stands for righteousness. Faith seeks to be blameless

When we walk by faith we rest from our own works

Faith is not transactional – there is no trusting in our effort to gain something from God

There is a question that Jesus asked in Luke 18:8:

“when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

He does not ask if He will find those who are saved. We know He will.

So why does He ask this?

This is a question that has always disturbed me because I think I hear a heart cry of the Saviour in this.

Will I find true faith on the earth when I come?

Will I find my people walking in faith?

Is it perhaps because He wants us to think about what it really means to walk by faith?

Does what He knows about us lead to there being a question mark that hangs over what the condition of our hearts will be when He comes again?

I think it may be because there is so much that goes by the name of 'faith' in the church that is not true faith.

If we allow the Holy Spirit to uncover the what is truly in our hearts we will discover that it often really begins with us, with what we want

I think it may also be because we know that at the end of the age the love of many will grow cold.

There will be compromise.

Our ways may not be easily distinguished from the ways of the age in which we live.

The writer of Hebrews certainly wants us to think deeply and respond to these things.

He includes some very strong warnings to ensure that we will not take this lightly.

But he also gives us some strong encouragements

- to be those who please God
- and who do not miss receiving the promises that accompany the great salvation we have in Jesus

As we prepare to spend time together on 20 November, may I encourage you to use these thoughts from Hebrews as part of your preparation.

Let us be those who are truly seeking God

Let us be those who are working with Him so that we become more and more a people who walk by faith

Who are seeking to please God in every thought, emotion and action

Who want nothing in our lives that does not proceed from faith

Because we want nothing in our lives that does not proceed from God

Let us become those who by faith and patience receive the promises that accompany our great salvation

There is a promise of entering His rest that still stands (Heb 4:1)

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest (Heb 4:11)