

Hebrews: No Turning Back

Week 7

Main Scripture: Hebrews 11:13–16

Speaker: Pastor Todd Strain

Main Idea

Living by faith means trusting God's promises, living with an eternal perspective, and longing for His presence above everything else.

Hebrews 11 is often called the *Hall of Faith* because it highlights men and women from the Old Testament who demonstrated extraordinary faith in God.

These individuals faced uncertainty, opposition, and difficulties, yet they continued to trust God and obey His direction. Their faith was not simply something they believed or felt. It was demonstrated through their actions.

The writer of Hebrews includes these examples to encourage believers to remain faithful, even when following Christ becomes difficult.

In Hebrews 11:13–16, we discover three characteristics of those who live by faith.

Getting Started

Read Hebrews 11:1–2, 6.

Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Faith means believing that God is who He says He is and trusting that He will do what He has promised. But genuine faith goes beyond simply believing something to be true. It changes how we live.

Think about the ordinary ways we demonstrate faith. When a doctor prescribes medicine, we take it because we trust the doctor's judgment. When we board an airplane, we trust the pilot and the aircraft enough to take our seats.

In both cases, our actions demonstrate what we believe.

Opening Discussion: What is the difference between saying you trust someone and demonstrating that trust through your actions? How does that distinction apply to our relationship with God?

1. They look to the promises of God.

Read Hebrews 11:13 and 2 Peter 1:4.

The men and women described in Hebrews 11 did not necessarily see God's promises fulfilled during their lifetimes.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob received promises concerning a great nation, a land for their descendants, and ultimately the coming Messiah. Although they did not experience the complete fulfillment of those promises, they continued to believe God would accomplish what He had said.

Their faith was focused on what God had promised rather than what they could immediately see.

As followers of Christ, we have also received great and precious promises from God. He promises His presence, His grace, and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Yet difficulties can cause us to lose sight of those promises.

It's like taking a golf shot toward a green protected by a pond. Instead of concentrating on the target, a golfer can become so focused on avoiding the water that the obstacle consumes their attention.

The same thing can happen in our spiritual lives. We become so focused on our problems, fears, and opposition that we forget what God has promised.

Living by faith means keeping our eyes on God's promises rather than allowing our circumstances to determine our confidence in Him.

Discuss:

1. Why do you think the people in Hebrews 11 continued trusting God even though they did not see all His promises fulfilled?
2. What are some promises God has made to believers that give us hope during difficult circumstances?
3. How can focusing too much on our problems cause us to lose sight of God's faithfulness?
4. Read Philippians 3:13–14. How does Paul's determination to press forward relate to living by faith?
5. Is there a situation in your life where you need to shift your focus from the obstacle to God's promises?

2. They live as foreigners.

Read Hebrews 11:13–15 and Philippians 3:20.

The people described in Hebrews acknowledged that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

They understood that their earthly circumstances were temporary and that their ultimate citizenship belonged somewhere greater.

The same is true for followers of Christ today.

Although we live in this world, we are not called to adopt its values, priorities, or way of thinking. Our citizenship is in heaven, and that reality should influence how we live.

Living as foreigners does not mean withdrawing from the world or avoiding relationships with people who do not know Christ.

Instead, it means recognizing that our identity and priorities come from God rather than the culture around us.

Our decisions, conversations, relationships, and pursuits should reflect our allegiance to Christ.

This becomes especially important when following Jesus brings opposition.

We may face situations where we must choose between obedience to God and the approval of others.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that people who live by faith are willing to be different because they recognize that this world is not their permanent home.

Discuss:

1. What does it mean for Christians to live as foreigners or strangers on earth?
2. How should knowing that our citizenship is in heaven influence our everyday priorities and decisions?
3. In what ways can Christians become too comfortable adopting the values and expectations of the world?
4. Have you ever faced a situation where obeying God meant standing apart from the people around you?

5. How can we remain engaged with the world while still living according to the values of God's kingdom?

3. Long for heaven.

Read Hebrews 11:16.

The people described in Hebrews 11 were looking forward to something greater than an earthly inheritance.

They were longing for a better country, a heavenly one.

Their ultimate desire was not simply to receive the blessings God could provide during their earthly lives. Their hearts were set on being with God.

Pastor Todd challenged us to consider how often we actually think about heaven.

Sometimes we view heaven as a distant reality or simply a reward waiting at the end of life. We may think about streets of gold, beautiful surroundings, or being reunited with loved ones.

While those things may be meaningful, they are not the greatest treasure of heaven.

The greatest thing about heaven is the presence of God Himself.

The apostle Paul understood this when he declared in Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

David expressed a similar desire in Psalm 27:4 when he spoke of his longing to dwell in the presence of the Lord.

Their hearts were not simply set on what God could give them. They longed for God Himself.

Living by faith means recognizing that our greatest hope is not found in the temporary things of this world but in the eternal presence of our Savior.

Discuss:

1. When you think about heaven, what comes to mind first?
2. Why do you think we sometimes focus more on the blessings of heaven than on being in God's presence?
3. How does longing for heaven change the way we approach difficulties, disappointments, or losses in this life?

4. Read Psalm 27:4. What does David's desire reveal about his relationship with God?
5. What might change in your daily life if you lived with a greater awareness of eternity?

Closing Challenge: Are You Living by Faith?

Read Hebrews 11:16 again.

The writer of Hebrews makes a remarkable statement about those who lived by faith:

"Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."

These men and women were not perfect. They experienced failures, difficulties, and uncertainty.

But they trusted God, obeyed His direction, and lived with their hearts set on His promises.

Their faith pleased God.

Are we living in a way that demonstrates our trust in Him?

Are our priorities shaped by the values of this world or by our heavenly citizenship?

Do we truly long for God's presence?

The examples in Hebrews 11 remind us that faith is more than something we profess. It is something we demonstrate through the way we live.

Living It Out This Week

Consider these three practical responses:

Look to God's Promises: Identify a promise from Scripture that speaks to a difficulty you are facing. Spend time reflecting on that promise and asking God to help you trust Him.

Live as a Foreigner: Examine an area of your life where your priorities may be shaped more by the world than by God's Word. Make an intentional decision to honor Christ in that area.

Long for Heaven: Set aside time this week to reflect on the promise of eternity with God. Read Psalm 27:4 or Philippians 1:21 and consider what it means to desire God's presence above everything else.

Final Reflection

Am I living according to what I can see, or am I trusting what God has promised?

Does my life reflect the values of this world or my citizenship in heaven?

Is my greatest desire what God can give me, or is it God Himself?

Hebrews 11 reminds us that those who live by faith keep their eyes on God's promises, recognize that this world is not their home, and long for the day they will be with Him forever.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the examples of faith You have given us in Your Word. Help us trust Your promises even when we cannot see how You will fulfill them.

When difficulties and distractions compete for our attention, remind us of Your faithfulness. Help us live as people whose citizenship is in heaven, making choices that reflect our commitment to You rather than the expectations of the world.

Give us hearts that long for Your presence above everything else. May our faith be evident not only in what we believe but also in how we live.

Strengthen us to remain faithful, endure difficulties, and continue following You without turning back.

In Jesus' name, Amen.