

Jesus: The Author and Perfecter of Faith

Hebrews 11:1–12:3

May 29, 2022

I wasn't anticipating having a break between the 2nd and 3rd message from the book of Hebrews, but obviously the Lord had other plans. Previously, we saw in chapter 1 and 2 that Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man. Then we took a wide view of Jesus as our great High Priest in 4:14–10:18. This morning, I want to look at Jesus as the author and perfecter of faith from 11:1–12:3.

As you look at the book of Hebrews, the clear theme is the superiority of Jesus. He is superior to the angels, Moses, Joshua, the Levitical priests, the animal sacrifices, and anything else you could ever think of. As we come to understand the superiority of Jesus, it should *do* something to us. The writer of Hebrews doesn't write this amazing sermon demonstrating the superiority of Christ to make us smarter. His audience, and we, *need* this display of Christ's glory. Why? Because if we come to a true knowledge of how amazing Jesus is, we won't fall away from Him, we will follow Him with enduring faith. The superiority of Jesus and faith are intimately tied together in the book of Hebrews—one results in the other. This makes perfect sense when we realize that Christ is the author and perfector of faith.

Faith is everywhere in the book of Hebrews, but the foundation, the bedrock of faith is Jesus. Jesus is the author and perfecter of faith. Does the writer of Hebrews call us to enduring faith? Absolutely. Will we be held accountable for our faith, or lack thereof? Yes we will, just like the Israelites in chapter 3 and 4 who did not have faith but who doubted God's Word and perished in the wilderness. This is one of the great mysteries of Scripture. While the tension is difficult for us to understand, namely, that faith ultimately comes from Jesus and we are still held accountable for our faith, the book of Hebrews is very clear that the tension exists.

So what do I want us to walk away with today? Work harder? It's up to you? You better not fall away from Jesus? I hope you have a stronger faith than those who have abandoned Jesus?

No, that is not what we should walk away with. I want us to walk away *looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith*. The source of enduring faith does not lie within yourself. Do you know that? It does not lie within yourself. The source of enduring faith is in Jesus. He authored it, founded it, and created it. He perfects it, sustains it, completes it, and finishes it. Let's fix our eyes on Jesus now together.

As your sermon outline says, our **main point** this morning is that **genuine faith endures to the end because it is authored and perfected by Jesus, our Superior Savior.**

- I. **The Explanation of Faith – 11:1**
- II. **The Content of Faith – 11:6**
- III. **The Race of Faith – 12:1**
- IV. **The Author and Perfecter of Faith – 12:2–3**

I. The Explanation of Faith – 11:1

Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 11. This is a very familiar portion of Scripture for many. It is all about faith and has often been called the *hall of faith* because it has a long list of Old Testament saints who demonstrated a life of faith.

The defining quality of faith in the book of Hebrews is endurance. Genuine faith endures to the end or holds fast to the end. Think about the importance of that statement. If *genuine* faith endures to the end, what does it mean if a person *does not* endure to the end? It means they didn't have genuine faith. If the defining quality of a marathon runner is that they actually *finish* the marathon, what does that say about those who run 1 mile, 2 miles, 10 miles, or even 26.1 miles and then stop? Well, you might call them a marathon

attempter, or a marathon enthusiast, or a marathon pretender, but you certainly wouldn't call them a marathon runner. Only those who finish the race receive that title.

Listen to some passages from earlier in the book that teach genuine faith endures, or holds fast to the end.

Hebrews 3:6, “but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope *firm until the end.*”

Hebrews 3:14, “For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance *firm until the end.*”

Hebrews 4:14, “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, *let us hold fast our confession.*”

Hebrews 10:23, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope *without wavering*, for He who promised is faithful”

The author is pretty consistent isn't he? What is the opposite of endurance or holding fast? Giving up. Falling away. Turning back. Apostasy. Or if we were to use the warnings of the book of Hebrews we would say:

Drifting from Jesus

Doubting Jesus

Dullness towards Jesus

Deliberately sinning against Jesus

Defying Jesus

So when we use the word *faith* in the book of Hebrews, we're talking about a very specific thing—genuine faith, enduring faith, faith that holds firm to the end.

As we come to chapter 11 and the description of faith given, I want to draw your attention to the very end of chapter 10 because this is how the author sets himself up to define faith. Read with me 10:38–39, “**BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY**

FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM
[that's a quote from Habakkuk 2:4]. **39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul."** The kind of faith that justifies is the kind of faith you *live* by. Faith is a lifestyle, and it is a lifestyle that must continue until the end of your life to be considered genuine. Or, to put it negatively as the verse does, the kind of faith that justifies does not shrink back. It does not fall away. It does not abandon Jesus. It does not give up. It does not, as these Jewish believers were being tempted to do, shrink back at associating with Jesus in order to avoid persecution. It doesn't turn to an inferior system that can never save. The righteous one lives by faith. And this is serious business, because as **10:39** says, **those who shrink back end in destruction, but those who have genuine faith live by it and preserve their soul.**

So you can see how 11:1 flows right out of the end of chapter 10. That's why the author says in **11:1**, "**Now faith...**" What is this faith that justifies and doesn't shrink back? What is genuine faith? It is, "**the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**" That sure sounds like enduring faith that holds fast to the end, doesn't it? It's not a temporary assent, but an absolute assurance. It's not a fleeting sense, but a firm conviction.

What is the author of Hebrews saying here? First let's look at this word "assurance." The Greek word has the idea of foundation and "speaks of the ground on which one builds a hope." The point is that *faith is not vain imagination or wishful thinking, but certainty in the objective revelation of God.* Faith is the assurance that what we hope for is real even though we cannot see it.

The second word here is "conviction." It complements the word assurance and is used only here in the NT. It can mean *proof or certain persuasion.* Biblical faith has *certain persuasion* that what cannot be seen is absolutely real or true. One commentary says,

“Thus faith confers upon what we do not see the full certainty of a proof or demonstration; it furnished evidence concerning that which has not been seen.”

So we could say it like this: faith is the absolute assurance and conviction in the objective revelation of God for things that we cannot see. Let me give you an example. Look at verse 3. “**By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.**” What is an example of the kind of faith described in 11:1? Having absolute assurance that God created everything that we see out of nothing. This is the perfect example of biblical faith. Were you there when God created the world? Was anyone? So who can serve as a witness to the creation account? Adam and Eve showed up on the last day, so not even they saw how the whole thing began. You can’t *see* creation. And yet, biblical faith takes the Genesis account as absolute fact. Why? Because God has revealed it and the world around us confirms it. Have you ever seen anything that was created out of nothing? I haven’t! It’s not your everyday occurrence. And yet, God, through Jesus, created everything that exists. God wants us to believe Genesis 1. And He doesn’t want us to believe it half-heartedly. He wants us to have full assurance, and certain conviction that God spoke the universe into existence exactly as He told us He did in the Bible.

Now this brings us to a very important truth about biblical faith. Biblical faith is not the same thing as wishful thinking. Do you know that one of the definitions of faith in Webster’s Dictionary is “firm belief in something for which there is no proof”? Is that how Hebrews 11:1 defines faith? No! The word “conviction” means proof. But this is how the world generally looks at Christian faith in God. No proof, but they believe it.

Our faith is not founded on vain imaginations and wishful thinking. It is founded on the objective reality of what God has recorded in His Word. It is based on the promises of God. It is based on reality. I’m not saying that a person can come to the belief that God is

real, and that Jesus is the way, truth, and life apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. But once God opens the eyes of a person, they see how right and true God's Word is.

Why can we have such confidence that God's Word is true? Because the object of our faith determines the validity of our faith. Think about that. If I have faith that I'm going to be an NBA all-star, I'm a fool. That's not faith, it's wishful thinking. However, if God says to Abraham that He wants him to sacrifice Isaac, is there any justification for Abraham to believe that God would raise Isaac from the dead as [verse 19](#) says? "[He \[Abraham\] considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.](#)" He did! Because the object of Abraham's faith was God. Additionally, Abraham had a promise from God, "[through Isaac shall your offspring be named](#)" (Rom 9:6).

Faith that is not based on the promises of God is not faith, it's presumption. The difference between faith and presumption is the presence of a promise. [Verse 29](#) is an example of this. "[By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.](#)" Why did the Israelites make it through on dry ground? Because they had a promise. Why did the Egyptians drown? Because they had no such promise. Our faith must be rooted in the character and Word of God, otherwise it is wishful thinking or presumption.

So what is the explanation of faith? It is absolute assurance and firm conviction in what God has revealed. This leads us to the content of faith.

II. The Content of Faith

Look with me at [Hebrews 11:6](#). "[And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.](#)" In our men's Bible study, we took an entire morning on just this verse, so we will have to condense this a little bit! Not everything that is called faith pleases God. If you have firm conviction in something that is contrary to the revelation of God, that is not

pleasing to Him. The difference between faith that pleases God and faith that does not please God is a content issue.

So assuming we would like to have a faith that pleases God, what must you and I believe? The author of Hebrews points out two things: 1) We must believe that He is 2) We must believe that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. What does He mean by these two phrases? I think he is saying that we must believe that God is who He says He is, and that God does what He says He will do.

First, we must believe that He is. Some translations say we must believe that “He exists.” I don’t think this catches the point. The writer of Hebrews is not just suggesting that we must believe God is real, though of course, we do. He is saying we need to believe that God exists *as He has revealed Himself to us*. Why do I say that? Because I believe this is a direct reference to Genesis 3:14. Let’s read Exodus 3:13–15. “Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?’” 14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” 15 God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

When God says His name is “I AM” He is using the Hebrew verb “to be,” just like the writer of Hebrews is using Greek verb “to be” in Hebrews 11:6. The only difference is that in Exodus is in the first-person singular, “I AM,” since God is talking. In Hebrews 11:6 he uses the 3rd person singular, “He is,” because the author of Hebrews is talking. Remember the audience of the book of Hebrews. These are Christians with a Jewish background. What Jew didn’t know Exodus 3?! The burning bush, the call of Moses, the revelation of the great I AM! They Jews all knew this passage.

If the writer of Hebrew is referencing Exodus 3:14, what does it *mean* when God says He name is I AM? It means that He exists independently of everyone and everything outside of Himself. Nothing outside of God determines who He is. He is who He is. This means God is *self-determined*. Who is God? He is! Period. I don't determine who He is, you don't determine who He is, the collective wisdom of mankind doesn't determine who He is. He is who He is, determined solely by Himself.

So the author of Hebrews is saying you have to believe in the God of Exodus 3:14, the self-determined God. And where has He revealed Himself? In His Word. In these two words in Hebrews 11:6, "He is," the author of Hebrews is saying that you have to believe that God is who He says He is. Does this mean you have to have perfect doctrine? No. Does it mean that if you are presented with the truth about who God is that you are free to take it or leave it? No. That is not the faith that pleases God. God is not pleased when you believe in the god of your own imagination. He is pleased when you take Him at His Word and believe that He is who He says He is, with assurance and conviction as 11:1 said.

Second, back in Hebrews 11:6, we must believe that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. What does this mean? It means God will do what He says He will do. [Isaiah 40:10 says, "Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him And His recompense before Him."](#) When God says He will do something, He wants us to believe Him—with assurance and conviction.

So let me ask you, do you have a faith that pleases God? Do you believe in the God of the Bible, or are you creating your own God to believe in? Do you know the God of the Bible? Do you want to? He has revealed Himself. It's right here.

And do you believe that God will fulfill everything He has promised? Do you believe God does what He says He will do? Do you know what He has promised? Do you want to? He has revealed Himself. It's right here.

Does any of this matter? Does it matter when you are facing the trials of life? Do you need to know who God is when the world is crashing in around you? Does His character affect the way you see the evil in the world around you? Do you need to know what He has promised when you lose a loved one? When you suffering crippling pain? When you are persecuted for believing in the God of the Bible? When you decide to stick out the failing marriage?

What is it? What is God asking you to believe about who He is or what He has promised in your life right now? God has given us everything we need to have assurance and conviction that He is who He says He is, and He will do what He says He will do. This is what we sang about in Whate'er My God Ordains Is Right.

Whate'er my God ordains is right, His holy will abideth
I will be still whate'er He does, and follow where He guideth
Why? Because we know who He is and what He does

He is my God, though dark my road, He holds me that I shall not fall
And so to Him I leave it all, He holds me that I shall not fall
We leave it all to Him, not because of wishful thinking, but because our faith is founded on the revelation of the God of the universe found in His Word. So we have assurance, we have confidence, that He is who He says He is and will do everything He has promised to do.

Do you want to have a faith that pleases God? Stand on the unwavering conviction that God is who He says He is, and that He will do everything He has said He will do. This is the content of faith that pleases God.

III. The Race of Faith

Next, we come to the race faith in [Hebrews 12:1](#). I know we are skipping all the examples in chapter 11, but for the sake of time, I will have to commend those to you on your own time. “[Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.](#)” The idea of faith being a race is such a perfect picture as we’ve already talked about. When you run a race, you’ve got to finish to receive the prize. That is the point of enduring faith. The main admonition in this verse is “let us run.” Everything else supports this main idea.

Let us run the race because we have the cloud of witnesses in chapter 11. These saints, who we just skipped over, lived their lives in such a way that they bore witness or testified to something. What does the testimony their lives proclaim? What do we learn from them? Do they testify, “Look at me? Admire my faith? Fix your eyes on us?” No, that is not what they bear witness to.

Their lives are a testimony of what [Hebrews 10:23](#) said, “[for He who promised is faithful.](#)” They held fast the confession of their hope without wavering. They *died* in faith. That’s what enduring faith is. How do you know God is faithful? Look at what He has done! Look at the promises He has fulfilled throughout the ages. The cloud of witnesses is there for us to look at and remind us that if Jesus gave them enduring faith, He will do the same for you and me. If you are discouraged in your faith, let the witnesses who have died before us be an encouragement to you this morning. Remember, walking by faith doesn’t mean everything is going to go smoothly for you. Some people were delivered *from* their difficulties by faith, but others were delivered *through* their difficulties by faith. Some were tortured, others killed, others imprisoned. Walking by faith means God will get you through everything and you will endure to the end.

Let us run the race by laying aside every sin and weight. We could spend a lot of time on this. Sins and weights are different. A sin is—well a sin! It is anything that violates God's New Testament law. So we need to lay aside things like sexual immorality, lying, anger, stealing, and the love of money. Lay aside every sin. Sin does not help you run the race.

Weights are not sins, but they are not helpful when it comes to running a race. It's not a sin to run a marathon with a 50-pound backpack on. You won't be disqualified for it, but it is incredibly foolish. Weights can make it more difficult for you to finish the race. I love what John Piper says on this verse, "*The fight of faith—the race of the Christian life—is not fought well or run well by asking, ‘what’s wrong with this or that?’ but by asking, ‘is it in the way of greater faith and greater love and greater purity and greater courage and greater humility and greater patience and greater self-control? Not; Is it a sin? But: Does it help me run!?’*" How often do you think about that? Does this help me run?

What matters in a race is not how many people are at the start line. What matters is how many finish. Don't let sin disqualify you. Don't let weights disqualify you. Paul said in [2 Timothy 4:7–8](#), "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*" Paul finished the course. He kept the faith. Don't you want that too? Don't you want that crown of righteousness? How do you know you're on the right track? Keep running. Keep running. Love His appearing. Desire God. Lay aside sins and weights. Fix your eyes on Jesus.

Let us run the race with endurance. The race of faith requires endurance, which is why genuine faith is enduring faith. Only through endurance can you run a race. You can run the race for a little while and give up, but that's not endurance. You can run the race so

long as everything goes your way and then quit when it's not what you expected, but that's not endurance.

Jesus spoke about building a tower and failing to count the costs so that it remains half built. He spoke about going to war without assessing if your army is big enough to defeat the other. His point was this, if you want to be a disciple of Jesus, you must count the cost. One of the reasons so many people fall away and stop following Jesus is because they didn't understand what it meant to follow Him to begin with. Jesus makes it very clear in [Luke 9:23](#), “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” The Christian life is a race, and it requires endurance. Is it worth it? Oh how I would love to spend an entire sermon on how it is worth it! Jesus said in [Luke 9:24](#), “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.” You will save your life! Jesus will bring you near to God, into the heavenly Jerusalem where you will dwell with Him forever in a kingdom that can never be shaken! It is worth it!

How can we do this? How can we endure to the end? This brings us to our final, and really, climactic point—we look to Jesus the author and perfecter of faith.

IV. The Author and Perfecter of Faith

Continue with me in [Hebrews 12:2–3](#), “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

This is one of the sweetest concepts in the book of Hebrews. We have already established that faith is essential. We are justified by faith. This faith is described in 11:1 as the absolute assurance and full confidence that God is who he says He is and does what He says He will do. The life of faith is a race, and only those who finish can be said to have genuine faith. And then you think to yourself...this is impossible! I can't do this! And

you're right! It is impossible for you and for me. Jesus, responding to the disciple's question, "who then can be saved?" said, "[with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.](#)" Living the life of faith that God has called us to is impossible of our own accord.

But I have good news. You are not the originator of your faith. And I have more good news. You are not the finisher of your faith. That is why verse 2 does not say, "looking to *yourself*, the author and perfecter of your faith." No, our faith is not ultimately from within but from Jesus.

This idea is the key to faith in the book of Hebrews. Many people get derailed in Hebrews thinking that salvation can be lost. But this, among other things, fails to realize the *source* of genuine faith. How can the writer of Hebrews be so certain that genuine faith endures to the end? Because genuine faith is from Jesus! And Jesus doesn't give false faith. The only kind of faith He gives is genuine faith. Wrapped up in genuine faith is the perfection, or completion of that faith. The reason we know genuine faith endures to the end is because Jesus ensures it will!

The righteous live by faith and they don't shrink back. How do we know? Because Jesus authors and perfects their faith. Think about that, can you even imagine Jesus giving a faith that isn't genuine? Of course not! Listen to [Hebrews 10:14, "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified"](#) (ESV). When Jesus saves you, and we know that happens by the faith, you are perfected for *all time*. Not some time. Not a little bit of time. Not even a really long time. For *all time*. You can't be perfected for all time, only to abandon your faith, and become unperfected. That totally invalidates the salvation Jesus provides. When you are saved, you are saved forever!

How do we know Jesus can give this kind of enduring faith? Because He is the Son of God! Because He is our perfect substitute as the Son of Man. Because He is our great

High priest and sacrifice. And because of the rest of [verses 2 and 3](#). “who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” Jesus can give you enduring faith because He endured the cross. He endured the infinite wrath of God. He conquered death. Do you think He can give a faith that won’t die? He can give you the strength you need to endure. Look to Jesus! Consider Jesus! If you feel you are losing heart, look to Christ who endured the cross. There is nothing left for Him to endure on your behalf. There is nothing that can take you from His hand.

The Christian life could really be summarized by this phrase in [12:2](#), “[Looking to Jesus the author and perfecter of faith](#).” How is a person justified? By looking to Jesus in faith as their only mediator. How does a person who is justified by faith live? By looking to Jesus as the perfecter of their faith. Friends, we need to get our eyes off ourselves, off our situations, off our political climate, off our finances, off our possessions, off our screens, and we need to get them on Jesus. I’m not saying those things aren’t important. They are, and our sympathetic High Priest cares about them. But they are not where we fix our eyes. We fix them on Jesus, and Jesus alone.

Perhaps you need to fix your eyes on Jesus this morning as the author of your faith. Do you know how you do that? You cry out to Him. You go to Him empty handed and say, Lord, based on the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, be merciful to me a sinner. Give me eyes to see. Give me ears to hear. Give me the faith that only comes from you. Save me! Don’t try and commend yourself to God. Recognize that you stand condemned before God because of your sin. Then beg God to commend you to Him through the blood of Jesus Christ. And God will grant you eternal life.

For those who you have put your faith in Christ, do you still need to fix your eyes on Jesus? Yes! Because He is also the perfecter of your faith. You’re still here, and that

means you still have a race to run! Jesus only gives genuine faith. Our confidence that we will endure to the end is rooted entirely in Him. And so we can say with [Philippians 1:6](#), “[For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.](#)”

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

- Fixing our eyes Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith

Look full in His wonderful face

- Our great High Priest, the Son of Man, the Son of God

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim

- Choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin

In the light of His glory and grace

- Because we consider the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, and we look to the reward.

We have a Superior Savior! Let us fix our eyes on Jesus with enduring faith.

Benediction

[Hebrews 13:20–21](#), “Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”