



# SERMON SERIES STUDY GUIDE

## The Days of Noah, Pt. 3

Pastor John Riggs

### Key Scriptures:

- Hebrews 11:1-2, 3, 4, 5-6, 7, 8-10, 13-16
- Hebrews 10:32-39
- 1 Peter 1:3-9
- James 1:2-3
- John 8:56
- Genesis 12:1-2
- Philippians 3:7-21

### Key Points:

- Saving faith is characterized as having substance, confidence, and evidential proof, leading to a change in understanding and behavior, rather than mere intellectual assent.
- The rapid advancement of technology, particularly artificial intelligence, is presented as a significant contemporary challenge requiring Christian endurance.
- Faith is described as factual, experiential, evidential, relational, and rational, exemplified by biblical figures like Noah, Abel, and Enoch.
- Lack of fear of God leads to rejection of divine warnings and judgment, as seen in Noah's time and in the present.
- Noah's faith was substantial, giving him confidence and assurance in God's word, which led to a change in his behavior and the construction of the ark.
- Endurance is a crucial aspect of faith, developed through adversity and necessary for receiving God's promises.
- True faith involves obedience and a focus on heavenly rewards rather than earthly possessions or destinations.



**Question and Answer:** (answers provided on pages 17-18 of the study)

Q: What is the definition of faith according to Hebrews Chapter 11?

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Q: How does saving faith differ from simply believing in God?

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Q: Why is endurance important for Christians today?

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Q: Can you explain the example of Noah's faith?

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Q: What does the sermon mean by 'endurance faith'?

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Q: How did Noah's faith condemn the world?

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Q: What is the significance of Abraham living in tents as a foreigner?

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Q: Why does the sermon emphasize 'forgetting what lies behind' and 'straining forward'?

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## Sermon Transcript:

Grab your Bibles this morning as we do every week and open up your Bibles to the book of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews. Yes. We are in our study in the Book of Genesis, but we are also going to be in the book of Hebrews today in this study. Hebrews chapter 11. Hebrews chapter 11. Now, the reason I asked if you're awake this morning is because you're going to need to do some thinking today. Okay? Yeah, I know. Uh-oh. Yeah, for some of you, that's kind of dangerous. I know. But I would like for you to, um, really think along with us today, be engaged in this. And really, I want to just do some teaching today of what the Bible teaches in regards to faith. Hebrews chapter 11 is where we're going to be spending a great deal of our time today. For those of you that have been along in this journey as we've gone through the Book of Genesis, for me, one of the most powerful lessons that we have learned from the examples of men like Enoch, Noah, and even in this passage in Hebrews 11, even Abraham, is that these common, ordinary men were men of great faith. Men like Noah demonstrated faith with endurance. Faith with endurance. Something else that we learned from Noah was Noah was steadfast in his faith in God over the course of many years. He faithfully built the ark, preparing for and preaching to others the coming judgment of God that would bring a worldwide flood of destruction upon all the inhabitants of the known world, in which all who were outside of the ark of God would perish. God elaborates for us a little more information on the faith of these men and even women, um, in the New Testament and the Old Testament through the writer of the book of Hebrews. In fact, Hebrews chapter 11 is a very important section of scripture. In fact, it's one of my favorite places, uh, in scripture as well. It's really called the Hall of Faith. You know, we put a lot of stock in athletes or rodeo cowboys, whatever they would be, who would be inducted to the Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame, they were inducted there because of their high achievements and whatever sport or activity they were involved in. Well, here in scripture, in Hebrews chapter 11, we're looking at God's Hall of Fame in faith. These were just common, ordinary men. In Hebrews 11:1-2, we're going to learn all these together. Let's look at these few verses here. Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things that are not yet seen. For by it, that means faith, the people of old received their commendation. Now, faith is the assurance, guys, of things that are hoped for. Notice, saving faith is not a faith of chance. What we're looking at here in regards to our faith in Christ, our faith in God, is not something that is of chance. In other words, it's not like we're rolling the dice here, hoping to roll a pair of doubles. It's not, it's not a chance. In fact, often times you'll hear someone make the argument when they're talking about being a Christian or a believer in God versus someone who's not, they'll use this argument that, well, here's the deal, to the atheist or the unbeliever, whoever that would be, they might say, well, here's the thing, I'm in a better position in where I stand because, see, here's the deal, if you, as an atheist, are right in what you believe, that there is no God and that when you die, you just simply cease to exist, then really, I've really not lost anything. And then they'll follow up with this and say, but, but if me, as a believer in God, believes in God and it's true, then you're in big trouble. Do you notice the either-or, or the if-or? Do you notice that? See, here's the problem with that way of thinking. Faith is assurance. The word assurance here is actually the word substance, confidence, reality. As Christians who have placed their faith in Christ, or as these men in the Old Testament that we're learning about in Genesis put their faith in God, their faith was not a faith of chance. In other words, kind of a maybe, or I hope this is going to play out, or don't really know for sure. No, their faith, the faith of saving faith that we have as Christians, it is the faith of assurance that has substance, that has confidence, and that is a reality. The second thing we notice is that faith is the assurance of things that are hoped for.

The word here, *elpizo*, in the Greek, conveys the sense of having a confident expectation or trust in something or someone. It is often used in the context of a believer's hope in God and His promises. The hope is not a mere wishful thinking, but a firm assurance based on one's faith. When you think about your own faith, or your belief in God, are you living in such a way that you demonstrate through the way you live your life that you believe what God said is absolutely true? That your faith that you have has assurance? That you know that what God says in His word is 100% truly going to happen the way God says that it will? The next thing is, it is also the conviction of things that are not yet seen. The word conviction here actually in the Greek means evidence or proof. See, this, this is evidential faith. It is evidence or proof that leads to a change in our understanding and in our behavior. See, here's the big difference between people who simply say they believe in God and those who have placed their hope and trust in God. There's a vast difference. There are many people in the state of Texas and the South that say they believe in God. They have an a mental assent of some, maybe even truly orthodox, uh, theology about God, but they haven't placed their trust in Him to the point that that trust or faith has brought about a different understanding and change the behavior of their life. In other words, they just continue living on the same way they always have, but they say they believe in God because, you know, in the South, it's God, guns, and, well, in our state, it's Texas, right? In other states, they have their own mottos. But here's the problem: is that saving faith? No, it's not. See, saving faith is the conviction. This conviction is evidential proof of things not yet seen. It's not that they're, they're like, we can't grasp it, understand it, or it's, it's just kind of a make-believe thing or like some fairy tale. No, this is proof positive evidence that because we believe this all to be true, we do what we've allowed our trust to be placed in Christ. And that trust of believing in Christ by faith has changed our understanding. And that understanding goes in a way of changing the way in which we live our lives. It's a direct change that happens when we have faith. So faith, guys, has substance. It's not void. You have people say, well, so and so just has blind faith. That's not saving faith because saving faith is not blind faith. Saving faith is confidence. It is assurance in God and His firm and factual promises, and the evidence that leads us to change our understanding and behavior, even though we have not yet seen all of the the completion of the promises that God has made. Our faith is not an empty faith, as some assume, but is full of substance, proof, and evidence. Our faith is in a person. And since this is true, our faith in God is fully, it's factual. Notice that it's factual. It is experiential. It's experiential. It is evidential. There's evidence. It is relational. It is not religious. It is relational. Many people within religious systems, even those who call themselves Christians, often are void of the experiential knowledge or relational knowledge of actually knowing God through relationship. So it is factual. It is experiential. It is evidential. And it is relational. And it is rational. All of those things. Why would that be the case? Because faith has substance. That's why it's rational. Here's the thing. In Noah's day, you remember what we've been studying? God comes to Noah and He tells Noah that He's getting ready to bring destruction upon the wicked of his time. And He tells Noah, but Noah, you need to build an ark. Build an ark for the saving of your life and the saving of your family. And Noah, the scripture says, in reverent fear, built the ark. See, here's the thing. People in his day would have thought what Noah was doing had no rationale to it because there's never been rain. In fact, scripture tells us that it was more like spring-fed. There had never been rain that fell upon the face of the Earth at this time. There was more of a spring, a spring from the bottom up, saturating and watering the foliage on the earth. And so Noah is building an ark for the preservation of his family and his own life because God is going to bring destruction. But here's the fact: Noah wasn't doing what he was doing based on blind faith because he had encountered God. Remember, God came and spoke to Noah. It wasn't that it made no sense or it wasn't rationale. Thank you very much. It was factual. It was experiential. It was evidential.

It was relational. And it was rational. Guys, we find this also in 1 Peter 1:3-9. So if you would turn your Bibles there and go to the right in your Bible, and you'll find First Peter. First Peter 1:3-9. So I always find it interesting when, when, when you speak with people or you hear individuals talk about Christianity, they speak about those people who have blind faith, like they're believing in nothing. No, not at all. Our faith is of substance. Our, our faith is assurance. Our faith is confidence. Our faith is evidential. Our faith is true. In 1 Peter 1:3-9, the Apostle Peter writes these words, speaking to Christians: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope. It's alive through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead, to an inheritance that is kept, or excuse me, inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you. This is factual information. Who by God's power are being guarded through faith. Notice that. By God's power, God is working in us. God has given us a deposit of faith. This faith to believe, though on our part needs to be exercised by what? The way in which we live in obedience to what we know to be true about God and His word. All of these things, though, are kept in heaven and they're being guarded through our faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. Peter says, in this you rejoice. We as Christians rejoice in this truth. We rejoice in the truth of our salvation. We rejoice in the truth of knowing God. We rejoice in the truth of His word. We as Christians rejoice. Why? Because we know through experience and all of these things that God's word is true. So no matter what we're experiencing in this life, we still have joy because we know what God has promised to those who by faith in Christ believe. Though now for a little while, Peter's writing to some people that have gone through some difficulties right now in their life. Some of you in here have gone through some very difficult things, and some of us in here will continue to experience some of those things throughout our lifetime because we live in a fallen world. These people here, Peter says, now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. What is the most significant thing that you have? Your faith. Your faith in Christ. Though you have not seen Him, Peter says, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him, and you rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith. What is the outcome of our faith? The salvation of our souls. This is the joy in which we rejoice in Christ, knowing these things to be true.

Hebrews 11:3. Let's go down through this section, and this is going to be more just like, let's go through and do a study here. This is a kind of a Bible study. It's a little different this morning, but I want to read with you a lot of scripture, and I want you to see this. So maybe this will help you understand why do I think this is so important? Because, because the days that we're living in, Christian, are going to require you to have faith endurance. It's a requirement these days. And the days in the future are going to be, and have been, and can be very challenging days. As we look at the world and what's happening in our world, the context of things that are going on, and we align those things up with scripture and what Christ has told us in His word about the latter days, we have a very good understanding about what's going to be taking place in these last days. We don't fully understand everything because some things are veiled, and they will be revealed in complete, total ability to see and understand at the moment that they happen. But I can assure you that the generation that is alive today, and those of the next generation, are going to see more change in the next handful of years than we've ever seen in our entire lives. If you don't think that artificial intelligence is going to drastically change the way we live as human beings, you, you, you don't have a clue what they're saying that we're going to be able to accomplish in literally five years with artificial intelligence. And by the way,

you and I are feeding artificial intelligence all throughout the day. We are involved in the system. Everything you look up on your phone, everywhere you drive, everything you listen to, all the songs you play, people you talk to, text me, everything you're doing on that device is feeding artificial intelligence. Everything. In fact, Elon Musk and others who are developers of AI say the greatest threat to humanity is artificial intelligence. Elon Musk just says, I hope that we can somehow make this work in a way where AI still deems that humanity is even necessary one day. What does all this mean? It means, Christian, that we need to have endurance. There are going to be many things that we're going to see happening in the world that already happening. A lot of things are moving that direction very quickly. But you need to have endurance. And one of the things I love about scripture is it shares with us stories of men and women who lived in real time with real faith in God, going through very difficult things in life, and yet they maintained faith endurance to the end. That's why we need these stories because not everyone is going to endure. But Christians, we must endure to the end. Our faith is so very, very valuable. We need to know this. There's going to be wars, rumors of wars. There's going to be so many things that we're going to experience in the next so many years. And right now, things are progressing so fast, technology is advancing at such a high rate of speed that we can't even keep up with it anymore. So there's a lot going on. So Christians, we have to have what? We have to have our faith assurance in Christ, not in the world, but in Christ. This is where our faith is in. It's in Jesus Christ.

Let's look at Hebrews 11:3. By faith, we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. It's an example of faith. In other words, God created everything, virtually, you could say, from nothing, not something we could be that could be seen. But God created all that we see simply by the word of His mouth. In Hebrews 11:4, we're introduced to Abel, that we studied several weeks ago. By faith, Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous. God commending him by accepting his gifts, and through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. We see that Abel was a man of faith in God. He was a man of faith. It wasn't blind faith, but it was faith in God. Hebrews 11:5-6. Here's Enoch. We didn't spend much time on Enoch, um, but here's what scripture says, even more so than in Genesis. By faith, Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death. And he was not found because God had taken him. Now, before he was taken, he was commended as having pleased God. And how did he please God? By faith. And without faith, it is impossible to please Him, that is God. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. Enoch is another example for us in scripture of a man who had great faith in God. Hebrews 11:7. Now, we're going to be back where we were last week on Noah. By faith, Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen. There are many events, guys, that are yet to be seen for us as Christians that are coming in the future that God has told us would take place in His word. We haven't seen them yet. They haven't happened in our time yet, but they will happen according to the way in which God says they will happen. They will come. And this is what we learn about this great man, Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear. It's one thing we lack today is the reverent fear of God. There seems to be very little fear of God. In fact, this, this, uh, emphasis of love of God has been so preached over the last 50 years without the judgment of God, that there's no longer a holy or reverent fear of God, as if God is some big gummy bear up in the sky of love. It's not true. He is the God of love. He is love itself, but He's also a God of justice and righteousness, and wrath is coming upon the unrighteous. That's the true fact. And God demonstrated His love and that while Christ, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The demonstration of His love was practical and real and came and displayed itself for us. But many people today

have zero fear whatsoever of God or His coming judgment. That was what we find out in Noah's day. There was no reverent fear of God. Zero. None. Nada. In fact, even though Noah, a preacher of righteousness, building this ark for the preservation of his life, his family, and anyone who would believe, they all rejected it. Why? There was no fear of God. We live in a world today where there's very little fear of God whatsoever. But there's coming a day where the wrath of God will be realized, and it'll be realized too late. But it's coming. In reverent fear, he constructed the ark for the saving of his household. By this, he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. Noah's faith had substance, confidence, and assurance in God and in His words of warning. Noah was fully confident in God's command. The evidence that led to reverent fear, causing his change of mind and his behavior by building an ark for the saving of his life and the lives of his family, although he had to work and wait for many years while God waited patiently. Here's the thing, Christian: we have to have endurance. Faith endurance.

Hebrews chapter 10, if you would turn there with me, please. Verses [Music] 32-39. Hebrews 10:32-39. Speaking to these Jewish Christians here, the writer of Hebrews is addressing them. He says, "But recall the former days when after you were enlightened" – that means when after you came to the knowledge of the truth – "you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison" – that would be those Christians who were imprisoned for their faith – "and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession an abiding one. Therefore," he says, "do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. Lord, for you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised. For yet a little while, and the Coming One will come and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and persevere their souls." Here in the, in the book of Hebrews, the writer exhorts these Christian Jews in recalling their struggles, their suffering, their public reproach, afflictions, and the plundering of their own property. Their worldly possessions that were plundered were no match for the abiding possession of the Spirit of Christ who was living in them. Therefore, he exhorts them to not throw away their confidence, that word means boldness, which has great reward. They needed endurance so after they had done the will of God, they would receive what was promised. The ability to withstand hardship and adversity is what endurance means, especially the ability to sustain a prolonged stressful effort or activity. For if you're going to train for, let's just say, some sort of an endurance activity, say you're going to train for a marathon, the race of the marathon does not begin the day that you go to the event. Did you know that? The race for the marathon begins the first day you make a decision, you put on your tennis shoes and your shorts, and you go out of your house and you begin to start training. The day of the event is simply the culmination of all the work that you have done in preparation to the race. That's all it is. So the whole aspect of the training that you do for this endurance race is actually the part where you grow the most. It's the part where you ready yourself for the actual event. And the greatest victories come not at the finish line, but along the way. Like those days where you don't feel like getting up and going out and training, even though you know you have to do it, you continue on. You put your shoes on. It's 4 in the morning. You're tired. You don't feel like going out and doing a long run today. But what do you do? You endure. You continue on and do what needs to be done. Why? Because you know your, your focus is on the finish line. Here, and the greatest victories that happen are not the finish line for many people. It's the little victories they win along the way. Those are the greatest victories. But the end game is what

drives you forward. And that's what we're learning about in endurance. Faith endurance has developed through adversity. James 1:2-3. We learned about this several months ago in our study through James. He says, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance." It produces endurance. One of the great blessings of men like Noah and Abraham is that we get to witness their faith over many years displaying endurance. And I can guarantee you that what Noah did was not an easy task, or what Abraham did was not an easy task. But their faith being displayed with endurance is what we learn from them. The next thing we saw here is the writer of Hebrews reminds them not to forget that Jesus is coming. Don't forget that Jesus is coming, Christian. We need to be reminded of that. That Jesus Christ promised, and He is faithful, and He's coming again one day. If not in your lifetime, you will meet Jesus Christ before He comes. Number six, he reminds them that the righteous shall live by faith. It's the way in which we live. It is our life. Number seven, he exhorts them not to shrink back. Don't stop. Don't quit. Continue on, but to persevere in their faith. I'm so grateful that God shared with us each of these lives of these common, ordinary men and women and their race of faith so that we can learn from them and be encouraged as we run our race as well.

Hebrews 11:8-10. Let's look at Abraham quickly and a few more things as we go down through here before we finish this morning. By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith, he went to live in the land of promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to a city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. Abraham obeyed and by faith in God, he set out not knowing where he was going. God simply said to Abraham, I want you to gather up your family and I want you to set out on a journey to receive an inheritance of a land that I am giving you. And what did Abraham do? He believed God, gathered up his family, and said, "Sweetie, take your necessary items. We're going to go on a journey together, and God has called us to go this direction." So he put it into action. That demonstrates his real, genuine faith. He was not unsure of the promise, though he wasn't sure of the whole journey he would go on, but he knew the promise was factual and that it was true. And he was looking forward to the promise. Yet, all the while, living as in a foreign land, living in tents. Abraham held on loosely to the things of this world. He was traveling through to the land of promise. He was not looking for the things of this world, but was looking forward to the city that has a foundation whose designer is the builder, God Himself. And Christian, this is a great challenge for us to not hold on to the things of this world too tightly. The reason Abraham didn't is because he was looking forward to something else that was coming. Coming. And as Christians, we know that we have this same promise. We're looking forward to what God promises us is coming in the future. And we don't hold on to things here too tightly. They're meant for our enjoyment, that is true, but we are not meant to fully hold on tightly to these things. Why? Because we are like the sojourner passing through this country. We are really, literally, simply passing through. This is not our home. This is not our final home. Anybody out there start feeling like you're less and less at home in this world? I find that usually older people get there quicker than the younger, but it took them a while to get there, did it not? Absolutely.

And in Hebrews chapter 11:13-16, we notice something about these of faith, and of course, Sarah is included in this first section as well. And 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 earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they

had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire, 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." This is descriptive of men and women of faith. Abraham had every opportunity to turn around and go back to his homeland, but Abraham believed God and His promises, and he continued steadfastly in faith, trusting and believing God that there was for him a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God. Did you know that God has prepared for you and I a city? Did you know that these men died in faith? These women died in faith. That means they kept the faith. They continued in faith, not even having received the things promised, but seeing them and greeting them from afar off. In John 8:56, we read this. Jesus speaking here about Abraham. He says, "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day." Isn't that incredible? He saw it and was glad. Genesis 12:1-2 says, "Now the Lord said to Abraham, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you, and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.'" He didn't not get to see all of these promises fulfilled. But as Jesus speaking to the religious leaders of His day was making it clear that He believed and saw this from afar. And Jesus said, "This is the very days in which Abraham saw and rejoiced." A whole nation of people, the, uh, going unto the Gentiles, incredible things that the whole world would be blessed through him. It's the reality for Abraham. The second thing we saw here was, "For people who speak thus make it clear that they're seeking a homeland." A homeland. If they were looking for a home on earth, they could have returned, as Abraham's case. Listen to what it says in Philippians 3:7-21. This is speaking of the Apostle Paul, but whatever gain I had, this is going to be lengthy, but I want you to hear it. "Whatever gain I had, I count everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish" – or dung would be the correct word there – "in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and that I may share in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by all means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this," Paul says, "or am already made perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do: I forget what lies behind." In other words, I'm not looking back at the homeland here. I have my eye on something far greater than what this world can afford me and what this world offers me. Paul says, "One thing I do, I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brothers, I consider not that I have made it my own, but one thing I do: I forget what lies behind and I strain forward to what lies ahead." There is effort in Paul's straining. Can you see this? He is straining forward to what lies ahead. "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Paul is pressing on. On. He's not turning around. He's not looking back. He's not putting his hand to the plow and looking back. He's not doing that. He's not like the nation of Egypt, who were a nation of of unfaithful, unbelieving people who kept looking back to Egypt when God had them at the very brink of entering the promised land. They, what? They acted in unbelief, and God says, "Fine, turns them around, and those people wandered in the desert, and God wiped out that generation and raised up the next generation, brought them to the river again. Let's do this over." Joshua says, "Do not be like your descendants who acted in unbelief. Don't do that. Don't turn around and don't go back to Egypt." Here's what makes this difficult. We're going to see people turning around and going back to Egypt. But Christians, do not do this. Continue like Paul. Don't, don't hold on to the things of this world so closely that they're so dear to you that they're dearer to you than Jesus

Christ is. Jesus Christ is the pearl of great price. He is the greatest thing that you will ever have. Jesus Christ is God. He is Lord. He is our Redeemer. He is our Savior. He is our everything. It's not that we don't enjoy the things of this world. There's a lot of things to enjoy here, isn't that good? Don't you thank God for the goodness of what we enjoy in this lifetime? But Jesus Christ is to be the greatest joy of our life because I can promise you, you're not taking any of this stuff with you when you go. The things of this world, they don't give you these things. It's not possible. And so Paul says, man, I, I don't hold on to the things of this world. I don't do that. I enjoy these things, yes, they're part of life, but I'm not holding on. Then Paul's not going to turn back. He has found Christ, and his entire aim, his entire goal in life is to press on to Jesus Christ and the finish line of his faith. He has Christ. Christ has taken hold of him, and Paul says, "And I'm taking hold of Jesus." He says, "Let those of you," and he says, "I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way. And if anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many," Paul says, "listen to this, for many of whom I have often told you, and now tell you even with tears, who is he speaking of? People that he knows that have turned back to to the world and have left Christ. I tell you even with tears, walk as enemies."

of the Cross of Christ, their end is destruction, their God is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds that are set on earthly things. In other words, the love of the world was more important to them than their love of Christ.

But notice what Paul says here: "Our citizenship is in heaven." Isn't that awesome? See, our citizenship is in heaven. Every time I travel overseas, and I enjoy traveling overseas, don't get me wrong, and I enjoy seeing these other countries and cultures and the beautiful sites and the spectacular things that we can enjoy on Earth. But I can tell you something, when you're in another country, you feel like a foreigner. You don't understand all the language, you don't understand all the culture, and you feel like a foreigner. But I'm always looking forward to the time that I actually get on a jet and begin to fly across the big water. And I'm really, really elated when I feel the tires on that bird land and hit the asphalt in DFW. And as I walk off the plane and I go into customs, there's a sign that says "Citizens Only." What do I do? I go through the citizen line. I'm home.

See, this is what we see, what Paul is demonstrating for us here. We, as Christians and those of faith in Christ, this world is where God has saved us and redeemed us in order to fulfill a calling and a purpose here in this world for His kingdom. But the reality is, when you came to faith in Christ, your citizenship became one that was moved to heaven, and you have become a citizen of heaven. And there will be within you a desire to go to heaven one day. It will be there. You'll be looking forward to a day, one time, when you will actually go. And trust me, when you get to heaven, you will feel like you have finally come home. Finally come home, because that is where our citizenship is. Christian, don't ever forget that. We have work to do here. We have lives to live here, but not outside of Christ. Our true citizenship is in heaven, and that's what Paul reminds these Philippian believers of. He says, "Our, our, our citizenship is in heaven." Isn't that incredible? That's good news, is it not? It is very good news.

And from it, from heaven, we're waiting for someone. We're waiting for a Savior. For those of you that have family members and all of these men and women of faith, do you know where they're at? They're in heaven. And we are going to be joined with them one day. We await the

Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself. One thing we have to always keep in mind as Christians is that we have a homeland. The song "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" is an awesome song. "I'm longing for you." There is this sense in which we know that we are not at home in this world. And it's going to become more and more apparent as we move through these last days that this Christian is not your home. If you lived in a country where you were persecuted greatly because of your faith, you would possibly have a much greater understanding about your home.

The third thing here is, "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city." Revelation 21:1-8. I want to get ready to close this out here. I want to read this to you. Some of you maybe have never read this passage of scripture, but I want to show you something in Revelation chapter 21. Just flip all the way to the very back of your Bible. There in chapter 21:1-8, John, now, is going to see something else in a vision. These are future things. I'm glad God wrote these down for us to know.

In Revelation 21:1-8: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away." Now, this is going to happen after the thousand-year millennial kingdom of Christ on this earth. This is going to take place after that time. We are going to rule and reign with Christ on this earth for 1,000 years in the future. That is a guarantee of what we read in scripture, and it lays it out very clearly for us. This is going to take place after the thousand-year millennial reign of Christ, where the heavens and the earth will be dissolved, and God will create a new heaven and a new earth. It says, "The first earth and the, and the he, the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." It's going to be different than what we have here.

And then John says, "And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem." I've told you this for many years, even in prophecy, as we've gone through that the very center of the world in God's economy is not Washington D.C. Not at all. The center of the world, according to God and according to scripture, is Jerusalem. It's the center of the world. What we're looking at in the millennial kingdom, we will Jerusalem itself will be inhabited by Jesus Christ Himself, who will set upon His own throne in Jerusalem when He returns. Scripture says His feet are going to land on the Mount of Olives. In fact, in Acts chapter one, the angel says, "And this Christ whom you just saw leave, He is going to return in the same manner in which He left." Where did He leave from? He left from the Mount of Olives. He will return again to the Mount of Olives. And just as He entered into Jerusalem before He was crucified, riding on the colt, the colt of a donkey, and the Jews would lay down their palm branches and came out to meet Him as He entered in as the King, riding into Jerusalem, who would be slain for the sins of the world. "Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." When Jesus comes again, and He enters into Jerusalem, He will land on the Mount of Olives and He will ride into Jerusalem, no longer on the colt of a donkey, but Jer, but Revelation 19 says He'll be riding on a white steed, a white horse, and He will enter into Jerusalem, and we will be there with Him. And He will, what? He will take control of Jerusalem, and He will set up His kingdom, and He will rule from Jerusalem for 1,000 years.

It's very interesting when you look at the course of history. We've, we've been nearly 6,000 years of history. The number seven all throughout scripture is the number of completion. The millennial kingdom will be the 7,000th year. We're in the 6,000th year, nearly. What's next? The seventh, the 1,000 Millennial Reign year. Millennial reign of Christ. After that's over, we have the

battle of Armageddon. God destroys all the wicked. Satan had been bound for a thousand years. He's released for a little bit of time, and now we're going to have a new heaven and a new earth. This is factual information. This is what's going to happen. We will be with Christ.

And then we move on and read this: "And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.' And He who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' And He said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha, the beginning. I am the Omega, the end.'" We see the beginning in Genesis of all creation. We're going to see now the end, and God doing what? Making all things new. He brings it all together, the bookends of all time throughout humanity. We're seeing this now on the timeline of eternity, on the Alpha, the Omega, the beginning and the end.

Listen to this: "To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. To the one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son or daughter. But as for the cowardly, I want you to notice this, but as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." So here we have what Abraham was looking forward to, a city with its foundations that were built by God. This is it right here.

In Hebrews 12:1-2, as we read through that entire section of all these great men and women of faith, we now wrap it up with this: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses," these that have witnessed to their faith for their lives, "let us also lay aside every weight," Paul, or the writer of Hebrews, says, "and the sin which clings so, so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." And where are we looking to? You're not looking to Washington. Looking to Jesus. How do we run our race? We look to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising its shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Christian, how do we run our race here on Earth? The same way Paul did, the same way all the men and women of old did, the same way all the Christians today are doing. We run this race with perseverance, and we do it by fixing our eyes on Jesus, who was the author and the perfecter of our faith. We run this race with perseverance.

In 2 Timothy 4:7-8, we can understand a little more in depth about what Paul mentioned here. He always likened our race of faith to a race or to a fight or whatever it would be, some contest. Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, and we'll close with this: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith. Henceforth 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 all who have loved His appearing." We serve an incredible God, do we not? Thank God for our faith. Thank God for our faith.

Here's one thing I want to close with. There have been many times throughout history when humanity really questioned the events that were going on in their time. But one thing I can tell you about the lives of people today, they are, they are shaken and they're being rattled.

And non-believers today know something is not right. They see the things going on in our world, and they know this isn't right. This is uncertain. This is unsure. This is greatly concerning. They have questions about all the things that are going on in this world today. The things that they put their hope in, their stock in, do you notice how rattled those things are, are, are being shaken now? The very things that people outside of Christ have put their faith in, their trust in, their hope in, there's no assurance in these things anymore.

This is a prime time for you, Christian, to not be cowardly, but to be very bold and confident in your faith, for you have, have the truth and the answers to what is happening in this world. And you have the opportunity, like no other time in history, to share with people the hope that you have in Christ Jesus, and why you have this hope in Jesus. I'm telling you, people, they're, they're finding some great uncertainty in these days. If they thought they could put it in wealth, or put it in, in, in the government, or put it in military, or whatever, no, they're finding out this thing is coming off the rails, man. In fact, we don't even know what these individuals are going to choose to do in this world next week. It's off the rails, man. But it's really not out of God's hands. We're moving to a day. We don't know when that day is going to be. It may be in the generation of our kids. I don't have a clue. Maybe in my generation, who knows? But I'm telling you, this is not a time to turn back. It is a time to mash the throttle down. What I mean by that is, Christian, hear me, don't you stop pursuing Christ. Do not put your hope in the things of this world. And when things get more gray and more cluttered and more, um, distracting, and, and, and deception becomes even greater, listen, fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and the perfecter of your faith.

I hope that this will be something that will come to your mind often. It's not that we don't work. It's not that we don't continue to raise our families, plan for more kids, build business. It doesn't mean any of those things. That's what we do. But we don't do it outside of Christ. Our hope is not in that. Our hope is in Jesus. Amen.

Well, I hope that this message will encourage you today as you face the things of this life and as you speak to people in this day. You now have lots to share with people about why you believe and what your faith means. And it's incredible how you can take this book right here and you can show it to people and you can teach them and, and show them the truth of what God has said about the days in which we're living in. Share the gospel with them by the way you live and speak.

**NOTES:**

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## Answers to the Study Questions:

Q: What is the definition of faith according to Hebrews Chapter 11?

A: Hebrews Chapter 11 defines faith as 'the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things that are not yet seen.' This means faith is not based on chance or wishful thinking, but on a confident expectation and evidence of unseen realities, providing substance and reality to one's beliefs.

Q: How does saving faith differ from simply believing in God?

A: Saving faith is distinguished from mere intellectual assent or 'blind faith' by its substance, confidence, and evidential proof. It leads to a transformation in one's understanding and behavior, demonstrating a genuine trust in God's promises. It is described as factual, experiential, evidential, relational, and rational, not just a religious adherence.

Q: Why is endurance important for Christians today?

A: Endurance is crucial because the world is undergoing rapid changes, particularly with advancements in technology like artificial intelligence, which are presented as potentially significant challenges or even threats. The speaker emphasizes that Christians need to maintain their faith and endurance, drawing strength from biblical examples of those who persevered through difficulties.

Q: Can you explain the example of Noah's faith?

A: Noah's faith is presented as an example of rational faith. He built an ark to save his family from a flood, a concept unprecedented as it had never rained before. Noah acted not out of blind faith, but because God had spoken to him, making his actions factual, experiential, evidential, relational, and rational, despite appearing illogical to others.

Q: What does the sermon mean by 'endurance faith'?

A: Endurance faith is the ability to persevere through trials, sufferings, and prolonged stressful efforts with confidence in God's promises. It's not just about believing, but about continuing to believe and act on that belief despite difficulties, much like Noah building the ark for many years or Abraham obeying God's call to an unknown destination.

Q: How did Noah's faith condemn the world?

A: Noah's faith condemned the world because his unwavering belief and obedience in building the ark, despite the lack of fear of God in his society, stood in stark contrast to their unbelief and rejection of God's warning. His actions demonstrated a clear choice between righteousness and sin, highlighting the world's own condemnation through their refusal to follow God.

Q: What is the significance of Abraham living in tents as a foreigner?

A: Abraham living in tents as a foreigner signifies his temporary status on Earth and his focus on a future, eternal home. He wasn't attached to earthly possessions or locations, but was 'looking forward to a city that has foundations whose designer and Builder is God,' demonstrating a faith that prioritized heavenly promises over earthly comforts.

Q: Why does the sermon emphasize 'forgetting what lies behind' and 'straining forward'?

A: This teaching, drawn from the Apostle Paul's example, encourages believers not to dwell on past achievements or failures, nor to look back to worldly ways of life. Instead, it calls for a continuous, active pursuit of Christ and the heavenly reward, pressing forward with determination towards God's ultimate plan.

Q: What does it mean for Christians to have 'citizenship in heaven'?

A: Having citizenship in heaven means that our ultimate identity, home, and allegiance are with God in heaven, not solely with this earthly world. While we live here and fulfill God's purpose, we are like foreigners or sojourners, looking forward to our eternal home. This perspective helps us to not be overly attached to worldly things and to live with a heavenly focus.

Q: How should Christians respond to the current uncertainties in the world?

A: In times of global uncertainty where non-believers' hopes are shaken, Christians are called to be bold and confident in their faith. They have the truth and the hope found in Christ, which is not dependent on earthly circumstances. They should use this opportunity to share the gospel and their unwavering hope in Jesus.

Q: What is the ultimate destination described in the sermon?

A: The ultimate destination described is a 'new Heaven and a new Earth' and the 'holy city, the New Jerusalem,' coming down from God. It's a place where God dwells with humanity, and there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain. This is the eternal home for those who have faith in God and Christ.