

JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

HEBREWS READING GUIDE

WEEK 20



JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

WEEK 20
OCTOBER 16, 2023



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

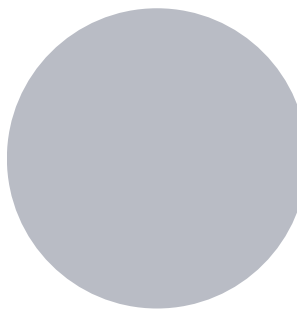
... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.




WEEK 20

HEBREWS 11:13-31



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DAY 1

WE BELONG WITH GOD

First read Hebrews 11:13-16.

We often measure the goodness of our lives with respect to goals we've reached, desires we've satisfied, or visions we've manifested. Our "bucket lists" are filled with ambitious experiences and self-made promises to embrace the fullness of life. This instinct likely causes us to bristle at the idea that the people of God **"all died in faith, not having received the things promised"** (v.13a). In other words, they died with unmet goals, unsatisfied desires, and visions yet to be realized. What's more, they could only see divine promises fulfilled **"from afar"** (v.13b).

Christianity offers a unique perspective in the modern Western world. We're invited to live as **"strangers and exiles on the earth,"** as a people that **"desires a better country, that is, a heavenly one"** (v.13,16). You see, the good life is more than met desires. The good life is knowing where home is. It's about understanding true satisfaction and fulfillment. The good life God offers us is being with and belonging to him (v.16). That's why the faithful could die with unrealized promises because God himself was their ultimate hope.

Jesus incarnates the fullness of God's promises. Therefore we no longer see from afar. Jesus even told his disciples, **"Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it"** (Luke 10:23-24). To be sure we're still called to live as strangers and exiles who live with unmet longings (see 2 Corinthians 5:2). However, we're invited to the good life now, knowing all our deepest aches, cravings, and desires are met in Christ.

DAY 1

WE BELONG WITH GOD

1. What does this passage teach us about the nature and character of God?
2. What unmet desires are you wrestling with? What might it look like to entrust those to the Lord?
3. How does Jesus bring us ultimate hope and satisfaction and peace?

Heavenly Father ...

It's easy for me to measure my life based on met desires ... desires for family, work, pleasure, adventure, and more. Calm my anxious heart. Settle my weary soul. Help me to find rest, joy, and fulfillment with you.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 2

WE BELIEVE IN GOD

First read Hebrews 11:17-19.

This is the second time in the chapter the writer has brought up Abraham. First, we were reminded that he obeyed God at his son's birth. Now, Hebrews explains he was also "tested" at his son's would-be death (v.17). All God's promises to Abraham hinge on Isaac (v.18). So being asked to offer up his son as a sacrifice to God was a sacrifice of his family, future, home, and name. It was everything. There was only one way Abraham could make sense of it all: God must be **"able even to raise him from the dead"** (v.19). Resurrection was his logic.

Testing is different from temptation. The Apostle James explains that **"God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire"** (James 1:13-14). Temptation draws us to sin. Testing draws us to righteousness. That's what God was doing. He was drawing Abraham toward righteousness. He was inviting him to trust, to surrender, to believe. While perhaps Abraham couldn't make sense of the act of sacrificing his son, he could make sense of God. He knew him as Father. He knew God as the one who gives and sustains life.

That's what believing is all about. It's not understanding every situation. Rather, it's knowing the One who is sovereign over every situation. God stops Isaac's execution. But he doesn't stop the execution of his Son. This is precisely why we believe in God. **"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"** (Romans 8:32). You see, resurrection is our logic too.

DAY 2

WE BELIEVE IN GOD

1. Why do you think God tests us?
2. How are you being tempted this week (drawn to sin)? How are you being tested (drawn to righteousness)?
3. How does Jesus' sacrifice empower us to overcome temptations and pass tests?

Heavenly Father ...

Give me faith like Abraham. When I don't understand my situation, settle me in your character, goodness, power, and sovereignty. Help me believe you.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 3

WE'RE BLESSED BY GOD

First read Hebrews 11:20-22.

One of the great ailments of modern spirituality is our individualism. We say faith is something between me and God (or some higher power). This affects the way Christians raise children and think about evangelism. Sharing our faith often seems contrary to our values of personal autonomy and tolerance. Yet the writer of Hebrews gives us an altogether different view.

Abraham's son Isaac blesses his sons, Jacob and Esau (Genesis 27:26-27). Then Jacob blesses his son Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 48:15-16). And finally, Joseph blesses all of Israel (Genesis 50:25). Trusting the God of the Bible was to them deeply familial and generational. Not only so, but faith wasn't something chased and earned. Faith was a grace. Or as Pastor Tim Keller explained, Christian identity is received not achieved. This is really good news. After all, when we look more closely, this heritage of faith was fraught with dysfunction. You see, they shared faith but they also shared brokenness.

Jacob tricked Isaac to get the blessing.

Joseph was angered by Isaac's confused blessing.

And you and I always receive the blessings of God imperfectly.

That's why it's such good news that God's blessing is received, not achieved. After all, if we earned faith on merit we'd lose it on merit too. But since we receive faith together as a grace, we can rest assured that God's grace is always sufficient in our weakness (see 2 Corinthians 12:9). That's a different kind of story to share with our children and neighbors.

DAY 3

WE'RE BLESSED BY GOD

1. What do the blessings of God reveal about his quality and character?
2. What do the blessing of God reveal about us?
3. Why must Christ's grace be received not achieved?

Heavenly Father ...

*Your blessings remind me that you are _____
and that we are _____. Thank you that all these
blessings are ours by grace through faith.*

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 4

WE SUFFER WITH CHRIST

First read Hebrews 11:23-28.

Much of our time, energy, and money are spent avoiding suffering and seeking pleasure. Solomon himself thought there was ***“nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful”*** (Ecclesiastes 8:15). Yet, as faith follows Moses through the course of his life with God, he chose ***“rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin”*** (v.25). *Why would he do that?* Well, it seems like Moses saw suffering and pleasure in complexity. They weren’t black and white—suffering is bad and pleasure good. Rather, both need to be understood within context.

In the context of our life with God, suffering can be redemptive and pleasure can be sinful and fleeting. ***“Suffering produces endurance,”*** shaping qualities within us for which pleasure is ill-equipped (Romans 5:3). Certain pleasures aren’t only temporal but misleading and unnatural (see Romans 1:26-27). For Moses, suffering with his people cultivated intimacy and solidarity. Forgoing the pleasures of Egyptian royalty, made it possible to embrace eternal reward.

This is a perfect picture of the gospel story. After all, Jesus himself ***“did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped [and] ... humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”*** (Philippians 2:6,8). Though Christ would not come until generations later, in his humble condescension, Moses identifies with our Savior.



DAY 4

WE SUFFER WITH CHRIST

1. Why do you think God allows suffering? Why do you think God allows pleasure?
2. What patterns of avoiding suffering and/or seeking pleasure do you see in your life?
3. How does Christ's suffering change your perspective on suffering and pleasure?



Heavenly Father ...

Give me the courage and wisdom of heaven.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 5 WE'RE SAVED BY GOD

First read Hebrews 11:29-31.

Many contend that salvation by grace through faith is a New Testament concept. They argue that in the Old Testament and with the nation of Israel, God reserved his favor for those who earned it. It wasn't until the New Testament and the coming of Jesus, they supposed, that believers come to enjoy divine relationship by grace. And yet, what we have read over and over again through this "hall of faith" is that it has always been grace; God has always saved his people through faith.

Notice in this passage, faith saved God's people from drowning (v.29), faith saved God's people from destruction (v.30), and faith even saved Rahab, a Gentile woman, from disobedience (v.31). God is the one doing the saving, yet this saving work is received by faith. And so when Paul tells us, **"by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,"** he's talking about something ancient not new (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation has always been initiated, achieved, and secured by God. It has never been earned through moral effort or the accumulation of good deeds or working harder or praying or reading our Bibles more. Salvation has always been a gift of grace received by faith.

Theologian Martin Luther explained that "Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times" (*The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 45). From the Old to the New, it's all grace through faith.

DAY 5


WE'RE SAVED BY GOD

1. What does the nature of salvation teach us about the character of God?
2. Do you find “grace through faith” hard to believe? Why or why not?
3. How does the work of Christ on the cross and through the resurrection give you confidence to trust his grace?

Heavenly Father ...

Achieving and earning make sense to me. But it always disappoints me. It breeds fear and frustration. Calm my anxious spirit. Help me to enjoy and build my life on your grace, by faith.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



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