



HEBREWS: Week 4

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HEBREWS

WEEK 4: Heroes of the Faith

BOTTOM LINE: Faith is kept alive through action.

SUMMARY OF WEEKS 1-3

So far, the Book of Hebrews has taught us several important spiritual truths.

Most of the book expands on the identity of Christ—from His position as the Firstborn to His role as our High Priest.

The book also teaches us how we can enter into the rest that God offers through His Son, and that is through faith.

It is not our works that save, but rather our faith that makes us righteous in the sight of God.

So, what is our hope?

In What (or Whom) must we place our faith?

The answer is Jesus.

As our High Priest, Jesus made a way for us to be reconciled to God, the Father.

His sacrifice on the cross, paid the price for sin, once and for all, resulting in our ability to be adopted as a child of God—if we believe.

LESSON

Read Hebrews 10.

1 The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. 2 If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared.

3 But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. 4 For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 That is why, when Christ came into the world, he said to God,

“You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But you have given me a body to offer.

6 *You were not pleased with burnt offerings or other offerings for sin.*

7 *Then I said, ‘Look, I have come to do your will, O God—as is written about me in the Scriptures.’”*

8 *First, Christ said, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings or burnt offerings or other offerings for sin, nor were you pleased with them” (though they are required by the law of Moses). **9** Then he said, “Look, I have come to do your will.” He cancels the first covenant in order to put the second into effect. **10** For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.*

11 *Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. **12** But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand. **13** There he waits until his enemies are humbled and made a footstool under his feet. **14** For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy.*

15 *And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. For he says,*

16 *“This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”*

17 *Then he says, “I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds.”*

18 *And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices.*

19 *And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. **20** By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. **21** And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s house, **22** let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.*

23 *Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. **24** Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. **25** And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.*

26 *Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins.*

27 *There is only the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. 28 For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to us. 30 For we know the one who said,*

"I will take revenge. I will pay them back." He also said, "The Lord will judge his own people."

31 *It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

32 *Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. 33 Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. 34 You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever.*

35 *So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! 36 Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.*

37 *"For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay.*

38 *And my righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away."*

39 *But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.*

Because Jesus paid the ultimate price for us, we should be able to trust Him, and we should want to live for Him.

We should be compelled to do good works to glorify Him, all while clinging to Him and believing what He says about who we are (children of God) and what matters (His Gospel).

The scripture that we just read, overall, encourages us in these areas—hope, good works, and trust.

However, in **Hebrews 10: 26-30**, we find some scary-sounding verses.

Let's read them again:

26 *Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins.*

27 *There is only the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. 28 For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to us. 30 For we know the one who said,*

"I will take revenge. I will pay them back." He also said, "The Lord will judge his own people."

These verses sound scary because they address sin.

And we ALL know that we sin and fall short of the glory of God—in fact, we are told as much in scripture.

So, then, is this scripture referring to the sin that we struggle with?

The temptations we face?

What if we give in and commit sin?

Are we then doomed to hell?

We must wrestle with scripture about sin instead of avoiding it, but it's also important that we understand what these verses are really saying before we give in to fear.

In verse 26, the author addresses those who deliberately sin.

This implies an intentional rejection of the Gospel.

The term "apostate" refers to those who, as in the Parable of the Sower in the Book of Matthew and the Book of Luke, hear the word with joy but intentionally reject it.

The apostate does not get saved and then leave the faith.

The apostate does not come to saving faith in Jesus at all.

The apostate practices sin willfully and without care.

This is the type of person whom these verses address.

Now, let's talk about sin in the life of a believer.

A true believer will still sin.

However, the Holy Spirit who dwells inside the believer convicts and leads the believer to repentance.

This process of sinning, repenting, and moving forward is called the sanctification process.

If you're in Christ, you will continue to sin and repent and be conformed into the likeness of Christ until you take your last breath.

Discussion questions:

1. How has Jesus proven that He can be trusted?

2. What does conviction from the Holy Spirit feel like?

Think of an example of a time you were convicted for your sin and explain how you responded to that conviction.

3. How can you be sure that you're saved?

What scriptures can you hold on to if you doubt your salvation?

Read Hebrews 11.

1 Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. 2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

3 By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

4 It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

5 It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—"he disappeared, because God took him." For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. 6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

7 It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By

his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.

8 *It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. 9 And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. 10 Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.*

11 *It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. 12 And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.*

13 *All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. 14 Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. 15 If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. 16 But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

17 *It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, 18 even though God had told him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted." 19 Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.*

20 *It was by faith that Isaac promised blessings for the future to his sons, Jacob and Esau.*

21 *It was by faith that Jacob, when he was old and dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff.*

22 *It was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, said confidently that the people of Israel would leave Egypt. He even commanded them to take his bones with them when they left.*

23 *It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command.*

24 *It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to share the oppression of God's people*

instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. 27 It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. 28 It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.

29 It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were all drowned.

30 It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down.

31 It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute, was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

32 How much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. 33 By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. 35 Women received their loved ones back again from death. But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. 36 Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. 37 Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. 38 They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. 39 All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. 40 For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.

Hebrews 11 chronicles men and women of the Bible who exhibited great faith.

They locked their spiritual eyes on a promise of God, and they followed Him to see it come true.

But, interestingly enough, these scriptures say that none of these heroes of the faith ever “received all that God had promised” (verse 39).

What does that mean?

Of course, we know that Abraham was promised that he would be a father of nations.

And, yes, he saw the beginning of that promise being answered through his son, Isaac (the son that he didn't expect to have due to his old age).

But Abraham never got to see the full story.

His faith, though, gave him the assurance that he needed to follow God regardless.

Even though we live AFTER the resurrection of Christ, we operate in a similar kind of faith.

We have been promised eternity with our Father.

Time and time again, scripture tells us that we will live in Heaven, free from pain and suffering, forever.

But this invisible truth is hard to grasp.

How can we live out a life of faith when it seems like our promise is so far away?

The answer is that, despite our feelings on the subject, our answer isn't far away at all.

When Jesus left the earth, He promised to send us the Comforter, AKA, the Holy Spirit.

He dwells IN us when we place our faith in Christ, and He is a guarantee of our promise of Heaven.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:21-22.

21 It is God who enables us, along with you, to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, 22 and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us.

Like the heroes of the faith, we must stand firm in what we believe.

Even though we can't see it, we can trust the "first installment" that guarantees our place in Heaven.

Jesus has placed his Spirit inside of us, and He will call us home when it is time.

Discussion questions:

1. What are some similarities between the Old Testament figures that Hebrews 11 talks about?
2. Have you ever had to make a decision based on nothing but faith?

What was it like, and how did it turn out?
3. Discuss a time where you needed to have faith to endure a trial. What was the hardest part?

How did God's promises help you move forward?

Read Hebrews 12 and 13.

Hebrews 12:

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. 3 Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. 4 After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.

5 And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said,

"My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you.

6 For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."

7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? 8 If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. 9 Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

10 For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. 11 No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

12 So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. **13** Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

14 Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. **15** Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many. **16** Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau, who traded his birthright as the firstborn son for a single meal. **17** You know that afterward, when he wanted his father's blessing, he was rejected. It was too late for repentance, even though he begged with bitter tears.

18 You have not come to a physical mountain, to a place of flaming fire, darkness, gloom, and whirlwind, as the Israelites did at Mount Sinai. **19** For they heard an awesome trumpet blast and a voice so terrible that they begged God to stop speaking. **20** They staggered back under God's command: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death." **21** Moses himself was so frightened at the sight that he said, "I am terrified and trembling."

22 No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering. **23** You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect. **24** You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel.

25 Be careful that you do not refuse to listen to the One who is speaking. For if the people of Israel did not escape when they refused to listen to Moses, the earthly messenger, we will certainly not escape if we reject the One who speaks to us from heaven! **26** When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: "Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also." **27** This means that all of creation will be shaken and removed, so that only unshakable things will remain.

28 Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. **29** For our God is a devouring fire.

Hebrews 13:

1 Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. **2** Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! **3** Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.

4 Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.

5 Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said,

"I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."

6 So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear.

What can mere people do to me?"

7 Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith.

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. **9** So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. Your strength comes from God's grace, not from rules about food, which don't help those who follow them.

10 We have an altar from which the priests in the Tabernacle have no right to eat. **11** Under the old system, the high priest brought the blood of animals into the Holy Place as a sacrifice for sin, and the bodies of the animals were burned outside the camp. **12** So also Jesus suffered and died outside the city gates to make his people holy by means of his own blood. **13** So let us go out to him, outside the camp, and bear the disgrace he bore. **14** For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.

15 Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. **16** And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.

17 Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

18 Pray for us, for our conscience is clear and we want to live honorably in everything we do. **19** And especially pray that I will be able to come back to you soon.

20 Now may the God of peace—who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—

21 may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.

22 I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, to pay attention to what I have written in this brief exhortation.

23 I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released from jail. If he comes here soon, I will bring him with me to see you.

24 Greet all your leaders and all the believers there. The believers from Italy send you their greetings.

25 May God's grace be with you all.

Hebrews 12 reminds us of our model, Jesus Christ, who endured suffering, rejection, and humiliation because He understood the end game.

In other words, He knew that He had to go through something awful to find something good.

And His suffering on the cross is an example to us that, although times are difficult, we can depend on our relationship with God—our faith in Him—to see us through to the other side.

Nothing good comes easily, and we can apply this same truth to our day-to-day walk with the Lord.

Although our promise is invisible, we must endure and run the race to see the victory.

Is a victory ever won without a battle?

The answer, of course, is no!

So, **Hebrews 12** encourages us to walk through suffering or discouragement with our heads held high and to allow God to discipline us so that we can grow to be more like Christ.

Hebrews 13, the final chapter of the book, provides a quick list of some do's and don'ts for the believer.

Of course, the author reminds us that we must have faith.

And faith in action is a sacrifice that pleases God.

For example, when we have faith in God, knowing that we are promised the eternal gift of salvation, we are compelled to do good works: feeding the poor, showing hospitality to strangers, honoring our spouse, and remembering those in prison for their faith.

And the author is encouraging us to always keep Jesus as our central focal point.

In all we do, glorifying Him should be our focus.

This is tough to do, especially when life gets in the way.

But if we've learned anything during this series, we've learned that Jesus is worth it.

Our Better High Priest has paid the price so that we could be saved by faith.

What better gift is there?

And what better promise of eternity could there be?

Discussion questions:

1. How is it possible to run your race with endurance?

What can help you stay focused on your race?

What hinders your focus?

2. Why does God discipline us?

Have you ever been disciplined by God?

If so, describe your experience to the group.

3. In your circle of friends, family, and mentors, who can you look to as an example of faith in action?

Why is that so?

SUMMARY OF HEBREWS

Wow, what a complex book of the Bible!

We got through a really tough text, but we learned so much about the importance of faith, the New Covenant with our High Priest, and the truths that we must apply to show the world what it is to be set apart.

Luckily, we don't have to be perfect.

No matter what happens, though, the central focal point is Jesus.

He is the Model, the High Priest, the Righteous One, the Suffering Servant.

In His death, He shows us what it is to suffer for a greater cause.

In His life, He shows us what it is to be redeemed.

In His sitting at the right hand of God, He shows us what it is to be assured of salvation (it is finished!).

May we follow Jesus and live out our faith until the day that we see Him face to face.