

Sermon Transcript

08.09.2026

Hebrews 11:32-40

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- Good morning. Please open to Hebrews 11.
- As you turn there, I want to briefly address the McKinney city council meeting this past week. Many of you are aware that the council voted to move forward with the construction of a major mosque and Muslim civic center in the city.
- And obviously that's disappointing. If you don't know why that's discouraging, I recommend you check out our culture and theology events on politics and on Islam.
- As Christians, we're to pray and seek a peaceful and quiet life and the good of the city in which we dwell and the government exists as a minister of God's justice for the flourishing of the common good and Islam does not advance any of these ends. In fact, its antithetical to these goods. Its an existential threat to all of the presuppositions of Western civilization which was built upon the Christian worldview.
- While Christians agree that all people are equally made in the image of God and thus deserving of dignity, we don't pretend that all cultures and worldviews and religions are equal in how they edify or destroy their adherents.
- And yet as I was thinking about this reality this past week, I was struck by a line in my sermon last week. I said, our circumstances aren't sovereign, our God is. I needed to preach that to myself this past week and to personalize it. Our circumstances aren't sovereign, Christ is.
- So our mayor isn't sovereign, our city council isn't sovereign, our demographics aren't sovereign, last night's meeting isn't sovereign, our King is sovereign and ONLY He is sovereign.
- As 1 Timothy 6:15 says of Christ
 - ...he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords... (1 Timothy 6:15)
- The only sovereign. There is no competing sovereignty.
- In our text this week, we'll be confronted by that reality yet again. As we'll see God's rule and reign plays out in various ways throughout redemptive history.
- The first half of the passage talks about things we love. Kingdoms conquered, lions defeated, fire quenched, foreign armies put to flight. That's the kinda stuff that gets us fired up and makes us want to get up and do something for the kingdom. We put it on our t-shirts and coffee mugs.
- God fights for His people. We saw that last week as Egypt was swallowed up by the Red Sea and as the walls of Jericho came crashing down. The Bible and our lives are filled with evidences of this form of grace.
- But then the text shifts. Sure, some women received their dead back, but others just died and didn't come back. Some were tortured, stoned, imprisoned, sawn in two.
- I don't want that. I wouldn't choose that. And yet that is no less a result of the sovereignty of God. That is no less a manifestation of grace and thus no less a time for faith.
- You see, its easy to believe that God is for you when you're standing in the rubble of Jericho, its much harder, when you're in prison like Jeremiah or Joseph. Its easy to worship when you escape the edge of the sword, but what about when you're killed by that sword or torn in two. Its easy to bless the Lord when life is good. When you're made strong out of weakness.

- But what about when your weakness is taken advantage of? What about when you're destitute, afflicted, and mistreated?
 - You see faith in the sovereignty and supremacy of our King doesn't just boast in the victories, but it sees beyond what is visible. It's the conviction of things not seen, as we've read before. So it sees God's hand even in the hardship.
 - We'll see that this morning. First, let's pray for our time together.
 - Self, others, me.
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- What is the overarching and undergirding three-word message of Hebrews? Christ is better.
 - Hebrews is an exposition of the supremacy, sufficiency & superiority of Jesus Christ.
 - As we'll see when we get to chapter 13 in a couple of months, the book as a whole is considered a brief exhortation.
 - The author writes this to exhort the readers to hold fast, stand firm, endure, persevere.
 - And he does so not with empty platitudes and rhetoric, but by making a theological argument about the person and work of Christ.
 - Remember the context. The original audience was suffering persecution: imprisoned and plundered. They haven't yet faced martyrdom, but that could be on the horizon.
 - And so with that suffering comes a temptation, the allure of drifting, falling away, shrinking back. Back to Moses, back to the Mosaic covenant, back to the Levitical system, back to the seeming safety of the synagogue.
 - We face similar temptations though we probably aren't enticed by the allure of the tabernacle or temple. But maybe you're in a hard marriage. So the temptation is to drift to divorce. Or maybe you're single and are tempted to fornication. Or you're frustrated at a fellow member so you're tempted to leave the church. Or you're tired of struggling with a sin so you're tempted to just give in to the temptation. Whether drifting into despair, addiction, bitterness, resentment, self-sufficiency, legalism or whatever, it's all a symptom of the same root of idolatry.
 - Whatever the particular appeal, the solution is the same and it's the supremacy of Jesus Christ.
 - Every struggle with sin in our lives is a fight to take hold of the sufficiency of Christ.
 - So the author writes this to encourage the readers to stand firm on the superiority of Christ.
 - He's a better priest who has offered a better sacrifice in a better sanctuary to establish a better covenant on the basis of better promises for a better reward.
 - The word better is scattered about like breadcrumbs leading us to the author's intent.
 - In fact, 13 of the 19 NT uses of the Greek *kreitton* occur in Hebrews.
 - In chapter 1, Christ is better than the angels.
 - In chapter 6, we read of better things.
 - In chapter 7 a better hope and a better covenant.
 - In chapter 8, better promises.
 - Chapter 9, better sacrifices.
 - Chapter 10, a better possession.
 - Here in chapter 11 a better life or better resurrection.
 - Then in chapter 12, a better word.
 - And what takes hold of the superiority of Christ is faith. Faith is the instrument by which we see what is inherently unseen, the sovereignty and supremacy of Christ.
 - So chapter 11 is an exposition of what faith looks like in action.

- And as we've explored the chapter, we've seen two verses that form a boundary around the definition of faith. First, is Hebrews 11:1
 - *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1)
- Second is vs. 6
 - *And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* (Hebrews 11:6)
- Nearly every example that the author gives, from Abel to Enoch to Abraham & Moses, exemplifies the characteristics that we see in vss. 1 & 6. These OT saints & patriarchs were confident in their hope, even when they couldn't see because they trusted the promises of God. They believed not only that God exists, but also that He is a rewarder of those who seek him.
- And we'll see that same theme continue in the text today. So, let's look at vss. 32-34.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. (Hebrews 11:32–34)

- To this point, the author has not merely mentioned an example of faith, but has expounded it in some level of detail, but now he shifts his strategy.
- He says basically, there are too many examples to name. We don't have time to list them all out which was a common Greek rhetorical pattern that we see even in our culture as when a speaker says something like: and so forth, and on and on we could go or the examples are endless.
- The point is to prepare us for what we will see in chapter 12 vs. 1 when he'll mention a "great cloud of witnesses"...too many to count.
- So we'll see a shift from a deeper exposition of a particular character's faithful acts which we've seen thus far to a bare mention of a character to a mention of the acts themselves w/out the character.
- This section begins with nouns with no verbs. He mentions Gideon and Samson and David and such, but doesn't tell us exactly how they showed faith.
- But then he'll shift to a bunch of verbs with no subjects, a list of acts that were performed, but no explicit mention of who did the deeds.
- While we're on it, the passage will also tend to shift away from using any sort of conjunctions so the effect is to build up the urgency and intensity. This is a rhetorical tool called asyndeton which is when you leave out any sort of connecting words in order to speed up the narrative. It makes reading this in the Greek kinda rapid fire so that you're breathless at the end which again adds to that feeling of too many to count.
- We begin with 6 names. Most commentators think that the names occur in pairs. Gideon and Barak, Samson and Jephthah, David and Samuel.
- Interestingly, in each account, the chronological order is reversed. Barak occurs in Judges 4-5 and Gideon in 7-8. Jephthah in Judges 11, Samson in 13-15. Samuel in 1 Samuel 1-16, David in chapter 16. But in each case it seems like the more historically significant figure is featured first.

- Now, why he chooses these particular persons is anyone's guess. He's ransacking the OT for examples of faith and he lands on these particular individuals, many of them surprising given what we know of their lives.
- But I think that serves an important point in that most of these names are flawed characters.
- Gideon questioned God by means of a fleece, Barak initially refused to go into battle and made a woman do his job for him, Samson was a philandering mess, Jephthah made a tragic vow. If you aren't familiar with those stories, we preached through Judges a couple of years back so go back and listen to that. Even David had a well-known failure and Samuel appointed his unfaithful sons as judges over Israel.
- So it might surprise us that he would include this particular group. But the surprise is the point. Think back to last week and the inclusion of Rahab and the rhetorical effect that would have had on the readers.
- If even a Gentile prostitute who hadn't personally seen God's works believed, then what excuse does a Christian who lives in light of the resurrection have for not doing so?
- Well, likewise, if even flawed men like Gideon and Samson are commended for their faith, that gives flawed men and women like you and me some measure of hope.
- IOW, if you read about Noah and Abraham and Moses and say, yeah, well, that kinda faith is unattainable, maybe these examples will resonate a bit more. The author doesn't focus on their failings, but their faith. Likewise, the Lord isn't focused on your faults, but on your faith, on your union with Christ, your justification, His grace toward you. In other words, what God requires is perseverance in faith, not faultless perfection.
- In addition, consider how many of these individuals illustrate the idea of faith being the conviction of things not seen. As we saw last week, God often works in a way that shows that appearances can be deceiving. Waiting doesn't seem like a good strategy at the Red Sea, marching around the city doesn't seem like an effective military tactic at Jericho. Likewise, Gideon is forced to whittle down his army and David is but a shepherd boy when he fights Goliath and Samson is a blind slave when he achieves his greatest victory.
- So he mentions these 6 individuals and the prophets and then offers a litany of actions that were accomplished through faith. You may notice that the previous verses reiterated the phrase by faith and here it shifts to through faith. Most commentators think that is just for literary effect with no real substantive change in meaning.
- So we now have 9 actions that seem to be divided into 3 sets of 3 activities.
- First, is conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, and obtained promises. Those could apply to just about any of the judges or David and Samuel.
- Second, stopped the mouths of lions which probably refers to Daniel, quenched the power of fire which is also from the book of Daniel & the case of Shadrach, Meschach, & Abednego, then escaped the edge of the sword which is too vague to really nail down.
- But while we are on it, think about how Daniel & his 3 friends complement what we saw last week in how Moses' parents, Moses himself & Rahab all risked the king's wrath to do what was right. That's the same theme as we see in the accounts in Daniel. All four young men feared the Lord more than the king.
- Third, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight which again is pretty ambiguous.
- In some sense, trying to nail down a precise reference goes against the grain of the authors argument which is intended to be more generic & fast-paced. Remember he's already said time would fail me and he's dropped the ands and ors and other conjunctions to speed up the pace.

- Now, notice the phrase obtained promises. Obviously many of the characters in the OT received specific promises. Just in this list, we can think of Barak, Gideon, Samson, and David all receiving promises as they went into battle. So they obtained promises and to some degree those promises are fulfilled, but as we'll see at the end of the passage, there is another sense in which they are unfulfilled.
- The author hints at a greater promise. We've seen this already in the book, some ultimate promise that wasn't fulfilled. They each experienced a bit of the already, but not yet of God's redemptive work. God had already fulfilled His promises, but not fully, not finally. That was yet to come as we'll read about shortly.

Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. (Hebrews 11:35–36)

- As I mentioned in the introduction, these verses present a shift, transition, bridge. Yes, some received resurrection in a sense now, but others refused release for a better resurrection later.
- What does that mean?
- Well, the widow of Zarephath and the Shunammite women whose sons are raised by Elijah and Elisha, respectively, they do receive back their dead, but eventually those sons died again. The same could be said of Lazarus or others who are raised from the dead.
- The author uses the word resurrection, but what they experienced wasn't really a resurrection, but a type, a picture, a shadow of resurrection. They were resuscitated, not resurrected.
- Remember typology refers to God-ordained parallels marked by correspondence & escalation. What these all experienced was like resurrection | a type of resurrection, that's correspondence. There is similarity. They're raised from the dead, like Jesus. But there's also escalation. Christ's resurrection is better. Why? Because He was raised immortal, perfected, never to die again.
- He rose again to a better life, a better resurrection. Which, by the way, is what these others who refused to accept release desired and what we have been promised in the final day. Being raised from the dead is good, but final deliverance from death itself is even better.
- So the author writes of a better life. Though the word life isn't in there. Its just the word better again. Better life or better resurrection could both work there. They desired something better.
- But the point is that some are raised and others are not, at least not initially. Rather, some are tortured, or mocked or flogged or imprisoned.
- Now, we don't exactly have to figure out who these people are in order to understand the point, but there is something interesting here.
- To understand it, we should go back to 175 BC when a man named Antiochus IV becomes king of the Seleucid Empire which ruled over most of Western Asia, including the land of Israel.
- Now Antiochus was not a good man. As emperor, he gave himself the title Epiphanes which means "God manifest," but, as a play on that title, he was called epimanes which means madman.
- He would roam the streets alone & just pop into a party & start drinking with guests who didn't flee in terror. Imagine throwing a dinner party & King Charles shows up & does a keg stand.
- But his most callous acts were reserved for religious persecution. In particular, he didn't care much for the Jews. He increased taxation, outlawed circumcision, appointed a Benjaminite as high priest, sent an army to massacre citizens, looted the temple, renamed the temple after

Zeus, erected a statue of Zeus there, & sacrificed a pig on the altar. Count the red flags in that sentence.

- That was the fuel for a fire that was about to erupt.
- So in 167 again BC, a priest named Mattathias refused to offer a sacrilegious pagan sacrifice, killed the Seleucid official, and fled to the hills with his sons.
- This is what Jews celebrate each year during Hanukkah.
- Well, Mattathias had a son named Judas. And he was called “Maccabeus” which means the hammer. He was the original Jim Adler.
- Now, we know about these acts not because they’re recorded in the Bible. They took place in the intertestamental period, the approximately 400 years of prophetic silence between the events in Malachi and the ministry of John the Baptist.
- So how do we know about it?
- Well, the name Maccabeus provides a clue as we read about it in the book of Maccabees which is an apocryphal book written during that period that is considered to be generally helpful, but not inspired which is why Protestants don’t include it in our canon as RC & EO Bibles do. If you’re curious why we don’t believe Maccabees is canonical, we have a couple of TEC on that, both by Ed. 1 is on The Canon of Scripture & the other is on Books that are Excluded from the Bible.
- Again, the fact that its non-canonical doesn’t mean its just completely legendary. Something can be true & yet not inspired & canonical. I believe that Stalin, Hitler & Pol Pot were real individuals though their acts aren’t infallibly recorded in Scripture. Likewise, in general, Christian scholars believe that many of the events recorded in Maccabees are historically reliable.
- And it just so happens that many of the events found in these verses mirror what is presented in Maccabees or other apocryphal works.
- For example, one story has a mother telling her son,
 - “Do not fear this butcher, but prove worthy of your brothers. Accept death, so that in God’s mercy I may get you back again along with your brothers.” (2 Maccabees 7:29)
- Another account has a scribe named Eleazar whose mouth was forced open to eat pig’s flesh and in response, he spit out the flesh and walked to the rack to be tortured.
- A recurring theme of Hebrews is that Christ suffered by identifying with us and that we therefore need to suffer in identifying with Him.
- As we’ll read in chapter 13
 - *So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.* (Hebrews 13:12–13)
- And consider how this must have read to the original audience. They’re being imprisoned, they’re being mocked. They’re being scorned. And so the author connects their experience to that of those who have gone before in redemptive history.
- Yes, sometimes God raises people from the dead, but other times He leads them to death. Sometimes He delivers FROM suffering, but other times He delivers INTO and THRU affliction.
- Likewise, maybe God’s sovereign will is to deliver you from whatever suffering you are experiencing or maybe the suffering itself is the purpose.
- As Peter writes in his first epistle:
 - *Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.* (1 Peter 4:19)

- If you don't have a category of how God can will & ordain your suffering then you don't have a biblical theology of suffering.
- Or as we'll read about in chapter 12
 - *It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?* (Hebrews 12:7)
- As someone once said, I've learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages.
- Or we should learn to kiss the hand that strikes us.
- That's the real fight of faith, the fight to rest in God's sovereignty when our circumstances seem contrary to the love and goodness of a Father.
- Rather than being marks of shame, suffering is reoriented as a badge of honor, borne by God's children in identifying with His Son.
- So the paragraph has shifted from the victories that faith wins to the trials & tribulations that faith allows people to endure. In other words, as Chrysostom reportedly said, faith accomplishes great things and suffers great things and it is not our right or responsibility to choose which we shall receive, nor condition our faith and obedience on such.
- Our obligation is to walk by faith whether victorious or victim.
- Let's keep going. Vss. 37-38.

They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.
(Hebrews 11:37–38)

- Again, many of these are intentionally ambiguous though others seem to be alluding to particular individuals.
- For instance, in the reign of the wicked king Manasseh, Jewish tradition reports that the prophet Isaiah hid himself in a tree and when he was discovered, the king ordered the tree and Isaiah to be sawn in two.
- But other than that, most of the rest of the phrases are pretty vague.
- And for an audience who had already suffered the loss of their possessions, it would have been of some comfort to read of others who were destitute, afflicted, and mistreated.
- In other words, this offers a new perspective to whatever they have suffered. They're in good company, following in the steps of some of the heroes of God's people.
- As we've talked about before, the Bible prevents us from making either of two errors when it comes to suffering. The first is referred to as the prosperity gospel. God wants you to be healthy and wealthy. Well, this list of sufferings faced by the people of God is clear evidence that that perspective is skewed at best.
- But the opposite error is sometimes called the poverty gospel. That is when you just swing the pendulum from one extreme to the other. From gluttony to asceticism, from the idea that God always wants you to be healthy and wealthy to the idea that you should be sorry for your health and wealth, that God always and only wants you to suffer.
- That poverty is inherently more righteous or spiritually mature, and that Christians should avoid wealth, influence, or power because these things are necessarily opposed to following Christ.
- Unfortunately, a lot of Christians are afflicted by that error.
- I just so happened to be teaching on Mark 10 in our Wednesday bible study this week and we came to the part where Jesus talks about servant leadership and so we talked about how

evangelical culture has often hijacked that term such that the servant part overwhelms the leadership part. As if any sort of influence or power or authority is ungodly and ungood.

- That Christians shouldn't seek political or institutional power since God is best experienced in suffering.
- Now, there is a slight little hint of truth there. God is experienced in the valley, but He's also on the mountaintop and throughout Scripture we see that God has given authority for our good.
- It is good for a land to have godly leaders, good for a church to have godly elders, good for a family to have a godly patriarch. For you to abdicate your responsibility in the name of Christ is to disobey the very one who positioned you in that office.
- Yes, some people aspire to lead out of narcissistic self-interest, but not all aspiration is corrupt just as the fact that some people abuse sex doesn't mean we all need to be monks and nuns.
- So I was thinking about that as it relates to the city council meeting this week and how that overlaps with our passage. Yes, maybe God's sovereign will is that we simply lose, but maybe not. This passage helps us to maintain the balance of either outcome.
- Sometimes the dead are raised, sometimes they stay dead. Sometimes wicked kings are defeated, sometimes wicked kings saw God's people in half.
- I don't know what's going to happen today, much less tomorrow. I don't know if some further circumstance will shut down the mosque or if sharia law will be imposed on my children. I don't know if we will solve the immigration crisis or if America as we knew it is gone. I don't know if the economy will repair or crash. I don't know if I'll live to see my grandkids or die on the way home today.
- But I know Christ is king and as long as that is true, I haven't been given permission to despair or give up. I know that Christ has conquered kingdoms and enforced justice and quenched fires and stopped the mouths of lions so I can march forward with hope.
- But I also know that Christ has led His people into pain and hardship so I'm constantly dependent. I can be desperate without despair. Confident without presumption.
- This passage helps us to avoid the extremes and to say that God determines our circumstances. For some he's appointed victory, for others defeat, but for all His children, He's appointed what is wise and good.
- But the point is that the circumstance isn't sovereign. Christ is.
- And notice what God does. He takes the shame associated with suffering. The shame of being mocked and flogged and destitute and mistreated and He plays a reverse Uno card on the suffering.
- The world says, you, Christian, are unworthy. And God says, no, the world is not worthy of you, my sons and daughters. Our worth isn't determined by the world, but the Lord.
- Let's keep going. Vss. 39-40.

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:39–40)

- Again, we see this already not yet that we saw before in vs. 13 which 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 the earth. (Hebrews 11:13)*
- As we talked about then, it's accurate to say that the patriarchs received what God had promised, but another sense in which they did not.

- We kinda see this hinted at linguistically in that earlier in the passage we saw that the saints had obtained promises plural, but now he shifts to a singular promise. They received promises, but not what was promised, in other words, not THE promise, the ultimate promise, the better promise.
- We saw that clearly demonstrated in the life of Abraham. He dwelt in the promised land, but only as a sojourner. Or Moses, who led the people out of Egypt, but never stepped foot in Canaan. Or in David who was promised a son who would rule upon a throne of peace and justice. To some limited degree Solomon fulfilled that, but ultimate fulfillment awaited Christ.
- Christ is the something better.
- As we saw in depth in chapters 7-10, under the old covenant, access to God was always mediated. The promised land was good, but it wasn't Eden, it wasn't God and man dwelling together in harmony.
- That's why though we read about Israel experiencing rest in the time of Joshua, it was merely a type of rest, a picture, a shadow. It wasn't the ultimate eschatological rest. That's why Hebrews 4:8 says:
 - *For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.* (Hebrews 4:8)
- That rest didn't come under the old covenant because it couldn't come under the old covenant because the Mosaic system with its elaborate sacrifices and rituals didn't truly expiate and propitiate sin, but merely covered it. It was a stopgap, a temporary and transitional measure until the fullness of time.
- And that insufficiency was symbolized in the tabernacle in which God's presence was mediated by various courtrooms and curtains representing the fundamental divide that sin had established between Creator and creature. The entire edifice screamed the inaccessibility of God.
- But the whole message of Hebrews is that we can and should draw near. What was forbidden under the old is now bidden in Christ.
- IOW, God has now provided something better. As we've said a number of times, it isn't just that the new covenant is new, but better. Better because of its efficacy & sufficiency & permanency.
- And notice the word perfect. Apart from us they should not be made perfect. You may recall that word running throughout Hebrews.
- For instance
 - *Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?* (Hebrews 7:11)
 - *(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.* (Hebrews 7:19)
 - *...According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper...* (Hebrews 9:9)
 - *For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.* (Hebrews 10:1)
- What is the common theme in these passages? The imperfection of the law and covenant and sacrifices of the Mosaic system and Levitical priesthood.
- As we talked about then, the people were not perfected because the system was itself imperfect. Not because the system was bad, but because we were.

- That's the difference of the gospel. The law merely proclaimed, but the gospel actually provided.
- Run John run the law demands, but gives me neither feet nor hands. Far better news the gospel brings it bids me fly and gives me wings.
- In the gospel, God takes the heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh and sins aren't merely covered over, but cleansed, expiated, and God's wrath is propitiated.
- And that perfection was retrospectively applied to the patriarchs. How were sinners saved under the old covenant if the old covenant couldn't save?
- Well, they were commended through their faith. By faith they believed in a promise & that promise was a shadow of Christ. So they were saved by the same faith as you & I though we can see much more clearly than they because we now see the promise through the light of Christ.
- And even OUR faith is still clouded by sin. Even our perfection is already, but not yet. We are forensically perfect, clean, justified and sanctified in Christ and yet the ultimate and final perfection is still a future eschatological reality to which we strive.
- And that future inspires our current faithfulness.
- That's a theme we often see of eschatology. In the Bible eschatology is much less concerned with setting dates and signs and prophecies and much more concerned with encouraging present fidelity.
- We saw it in Hebrews 10 where we were commanded to encourage one another and not give up meeting together and it says to do this all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
- Or in 1 Corinthians 15, after writing about our future resurrection, Paul writes:
 - *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.* (1 Corinthians 15:58)
- Or in 2 Peter, after writing about the Day of the Lord, the apostle writes:
 - *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness...* (2 Peter 3:11)
- Eschatology isn't intended to be merely speculative, it is intended to encourage us toward faithfulness today.
- Whether conquering kingdoms or being conquered. Whether carrying the sword or falling by the sword. Whether stopping the mouths of lions or being consumed by lions in the coliseum. Whether seeing hundreds of Muslims come to Christ or seeing our country submitted to sharia.
- Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen and no one has seen what God is doing or will do and yet faith sees the promise in the midst of the uncertainty.
- Faith believe not only that He exists, but that He rewards those who seek Him, that He works all things for good. That nothing can separate us from God's love or power.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- One thing we often talk about here at Reformation is the diluting tendency of evangelical culture. American Christians tend to want a microwavable theology. We take what is robust and complex and beautiful in its various colors and hues and we reduce it down to 2 dimensional gray scale.
- So we see that in communion which God designed to be multi-faceted.
- It calls us to look inward. To reflect on our sins and repent. But also to look outward, to look at Christ's death and resurrection. So in that sense it is subjective and objective.

- It has a vertical and horizontal dimension. We commune not only with God above, but with each other all around.
- And it moves us to believe backwards and forwards. By backwards, obviously we remember and proclaim Christ's death.
- But Paul says that we proclaim Christ's death until He comes. And when Christ appoints the meal, He says, I won't drink this cup again until the kingdom.
- IOW, there is a forward-facing eschatological element to communion. It causes us to think upon a future meal, the wedding supper of the Lamb when the already but not yet collapse.
- So as we prepare to partake, I want to encourage you to focus on that future day. Its like going to taste the food of the caterer in preparation for your wedding.
- As we partake, consider the promise that one day we will be made perfect. That whatever ails you or troubles you or terrifies you will be no more, that death will be no more, sorrow no more, sickness no more.
- Because Christ is king and He's coming back soon.
- Take a second and prepare your heart and we'll partake together shortly.
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