

LET US HOLD UNSWERVINGLY TO THE HOPE WE PROFESS

Hebrews 10:19 – 11:40

Key Verse 10:23

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."

The Letter to the Hebrews was probably written in the 60's AD by Apostle Paul. The letter is addressed to Christians with a Jewish background. Because of the persecutions, these believers were at risk of rejecting Jesus again and falling back into Jewry. The author therefore encouraged these Christians to embrace the majesty and uniqueness of Jesus Christ and to hold fast to the true and perfect redemptive work of God through Jesus Christ under all circumstances. He encouraged them to patiently fight the good fight of faith until the end.

Last week we had been thinking about the passage chapter 9:1 - 10:18 and learned about Jesus as the mediator of the new covenant. In the Old Covenant, God gave His people Israel an earthly sanctuary - the tabernacle. There the Jews celebrated their services and feasts along with the prescribed sacrifices and cultivated their love relationship with God. But the sacrifices of animals had to be offered again and again in the sanctuary. Even the tabernacle was not eternal. But with the coming of Jesus, the time of the greater and perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, had begun. Our Lord Jesus Christ, through His substitutionary sacrificial death for us on the cross, has become for all who believe in Him, once and for all, the new living way into the Most Holy Place. Thus, through Jesus' death on the cross, we have received the saving grace entirely without our merit - by grace alone. Jesus' substitutionary sacrificial death cleansed our conscience and took away sin from us, making us perfect to be His people.

In today's text, the author tells us how we may live with the wonderful grace of God. It is about the new life in Christ because Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross has become the new and living way into the Kingdom of God for all believers. Today, we want to know through the ancestors of faith with what confession of hope we may patiently fight the race of faith and receive the crown of victory of life in the eternal Kingdom of God. God grant us patience and faith to reject all oppositions, persecutions, and temptations of this world and to patiently lead the overcoming, victorious life of faith. May he strengthen us to resolutely walk the new and living way of Jesus to the end. Let us not retreat but follow the example of faith of the numerous forerunners of faith, whatever the cost.

I. You need to persevere so that you will receive what he has promised (10:19-39)

Let us look at verses 19-21: "Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God,...". Verse 19 begins with the word "Therefore". The writer here makes a short conclusion to the previous chapters, "Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus..." Not a single person, by his own works or by his own righteousness, could fulfill God's righteousness and acquire freedom to enter the kingdom of God. Because of the tremendous power of sin, all people without exception were

doomed to fail in establishing a relationship with God. No one, not even one, could enter the kingdom of God by his own effort and merit. The high priest went into the sanctuary of the tabernacle once a year and asked God for atonement for sins through the blood sacrifice of bulls and goats. But people are so incurably and incorrigibly sin-sick and their sacrifices were not a perfect sacrifice. They had to be offered over and over again.

But God prepared a magnificent plan of salvation through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, for the sinning people. He established Christ as the true High Priest who shed His sinless, pure and holy blood on the cross of Calvary for our salvation and accomplished God's work of redemption once and for all for eternity. Jesus gave Himself on the cross as the true and perfect sacrificial Lamb. Through this sacrificial lamb, Jesus, the curtain into the Holy of Holies was parted once and for all from top to bottom. How could the curtain, whose thickness was about 10 cm, be torn? By the power of the blood of Jesus alone! By the power of the blood of Christ alone, the curtain was parted and the new living way was opened. Through this exceedingly costly path, we have indeed received the freedom and privilege to enter into the Holy of Holies of God, attain complete purification and forgiveness, and establish an eternal love and life relationship with God, our Heavenly Father. Praise and thanks be to Jesus, our true and eternal High Priest, who by his perfect sacrifice on the cross brought about perfect reconciliation once and for all and opened for us the new and living way into the Kingdom of God.

Let us look at verses 22.23: "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." The author of Hebrews is addressing Jewish-born Christians, who were increasingly persecuted at that time. Some wondered whether they should continue to hold on to Christ and live a sanctified and

new life under such adverse circumstances. But he calls on these very believers, "Let us draw near to God with a true heart and in perfect faith; let us hold fast to the confession of hope and not waver." That is, "Yes, absolutely; hold fast to Jesus and to his work of salvation! For he is faithful who promised it (the living hope)!" We are living in a time of fundamental change in world history. It is very easy to abandon the spiritual values of biblical doctrine and the biblical view of values and the world and simply conform to the spirit of the age. What a frivolity this is! All the more seriously this applies to us and also to the believers of the Next Generation. In a time of war, crisis, catastrophes and persecutions, we get irritated very easily, and repress God's work and grace very lightly. Thus, many slowly lose their confession of hope. But the writer encourages us, "Let us hold fast the confession of hope, and not waver; for he is faithful." Political ideologies come and go; political leaders come and go; even world powers come and go; but we believe in the almighty, sovereign and eternal Creator God who was and who is and who is to come. Not a single promise of His Word will remain unfulfilled. No one who trusts in God's Word will lose anything or be disappointed in the end. Therefore, we may confidently encourage one another: "Hold fast to the grace of Christ! Stand firm in the confession of hope. Do not waver! Rely absolutely on God's unchanging faithfulness!"

Consider verses 24.25: "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Paul encourages the believers who were facing tribulations to watch out for one another; to spur one another on toward brotherly love; not to forsake their assemblies; and to be certain that the day of Jesus' return is drawing near. For Christians, community is vital - especially spiritual community and community of life. The first Christians even had community of goods. Through spiritual fellowship, our Next Generation also grows in many ways, so that they spur one another on

toward brotherly love and good works, to serve their friends and fellow students with the Word of God; also to work together for the work of God through the Global Leadership Empowerment Forum (GLEF) and through the online mission. Looking out for each other is the vital task of believers for the whole church. Instead of being indifferent, we may be spiritually ever vigilant and filled with a spirit of prayer to serve and spiritually help our brothers and sisters in faith with practical help and care, especially also those who have become weak in faith because of contestation and afflictions.

Let us look at verses 26-31. In this passage, the writer warned the Jewish Christians who had become believers very seriously not to sin willfully. Whoever deliberately relativizes and doubts the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross and the work of God in his own life has no other sacrifice for his sins from now on! To sin under grace is even worse than to sin under the law. Therefore verse 29 says, "How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?" Verse 31 forcefully warns, "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

In verses 32-34, Paul encourages believers to remember their earlier magnificent struggle of faith. They had been confronted, immediately after becoming believers, with the unbearable suffering of Christ. They had become spectacles themselves, in part, through vituperation and affliction. They had suffered with the captives, even endured the robbery of their goods with joy. All this they took upon themselves because, as verse 34b says, they would possess better and lasting possessions. Because they believed that they had become co-heirs with Christ and co-heirs with the kingdom of God, they had courageously renounced even earthly goods and securities. Now the writer reminded them of this earlier victorious struggle of faith and encouraged them to hold on to it, instead of now being impatient and by

falling away from the faith, relativizing their earlier struggle of faith.

Let's look at verses 35,36: "So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised." What guidance does the writer give to Jewish-born Christians? They should not throw away their trust and do the will of God until the end. Let us imagine a marathon runner. He does his best to reach the finish line, even though the way there is very long and arduous. But what if, just before the finish line, the marathon runner suddenly stops for a glass of fresh water or for a delicious milkshake and does not cross the finish line? "How stupid..." we think, don't we? But that's how "stupid" many believers are, stopping their faith race along the way and rejecting the precious grace of God in order to occupy themselves with the trivial and transitory things of life. Paul exhorts them to learn patience: "You need to persevere ..." (36a). Impatience is an expression of unbelief, of thinking that one can do something oneself and do it better oneself. As spiritual marathon runners, let us keep the goal in mind at all times and run patiently to the finish line! Our goal is Jesus, to whom we will go at the end of our lives. Paul encourages us to wait patiently for Jesus' return. He will surely come again in great power and glory. Nothing further needs to be fulfilled; daily our Lord Jesus can come again. That's why the writer encourages us to wait a little while longer in verse 37: "For, in just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay." Matthew 24:44 says, "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

Verses 38,39 encourage believers to live by faith until the end. Let us read these verses: "But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved." These verses teach us how to obtain what is promised. Paul quotes the prophet Habakkuk (2:3-4), "But the righteous one will live by faith." By faith alone! Faith is

not an abstract thing or thought experiment, but it is something very practical and living. Whoever believes, but then gives up his life of faith again, God has no pleasure in him. Let's read verse: "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved." Backsliding in the spiritual life has an exceedingly tragic consequence: those who backslide will be damned. Paul does not mince words here. We who are called of God and have received His grace are runners for the sovereign counsel of God and fighters for the kingdom of God. We are fighters of Christ Jesus for his work of salvation. We are engaged in a holy battle against the powers and forces of darkness. We fight against the false doctrines and false spirits of this world, such as humanism, relativism and hedonism. Those who retreat or give up in this struggle lose exceedingly - they will even be condemned. Let us personally hear Paul's admonition, warning and encouragement and not retreat, but patiently fight the good fight of faith to the end. Paul himself fought the spiritual battle to the end with the confession of God's hope. In 2 Timothy 4:7, 8 he testifies, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." Let us be among those who do not retreat, but fight the good fight of faith with the confession of hope to the end and receive what is promised. M. Peter and M. Sarah do not retreat but fight with the confession of God's hope. They see the hope of God for the young people in Germany. Thus, in the midst of the godless, humanistic environment, they see young people being changed by the work of God's Word and being set up as shepherds, Bible teachers and spiritual leaders. By faith, they see God raising up the Next Generation as global spiritual leaders and outstanding Bible teachers for the world mission work. They see Germany and Europe being spiritually awakened and used as a shepherd nation for world missions. Let us also be fighters and warriors of faith, holding fast to the confession of God's hope in all

circumstances and saving souls instead of recoiling and being condemned! Let us not retreat from serving the work of 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams, pioneering 1,700 universities in Europe, and establishing 120 mission base camps all the way to the M-world. Let us not retreat from serving the disciple making ministry through the life community and sending out 100,000 missionaries to all countries by 2041. Amen.

II. Faith that pleases God and overcomes the world (11:1-40)

In chapter 11, we encounter numerous heroes and heroines of faith, all of whom - as we learned in chapter 10 - held fast to the confession of hope, who did not waver, and who testified by their faith that God is faithful. Let's look at verse 1: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Here the writer gives a definition of faith in two parts. On the one hand, faith is a realization of what one hopes for; that is, directed toward the future. That is, through faith, what is to come is already a reality. On the other hand, faith is a firm conviction of things that one does not see. This is related to the present. Faith sees what is really there, but what is not perceived by the natural eye. Faith sees that God is really with us here and now, standing by our side and working with us and through us. Because of this firm assurance of faith, the heroes of faith in the Old Testament, could overcome any adverse environment and situation and experience the almighty, living and faithful God in real terms.

Consider verse 3: "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." The faith of creation states that the world and all things came into being from nothing. This belief constitutes the foundation of faith. Whoever does not believe that God is the origin and creator of all things - what kind of God does he or she want to believe in? Genesis 1:1 testifies, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." May God give us firm creation

faith by which we can clearly see day by day that the world is created by the Word of God. May He open our spiritual eyes to see that all things came into being from nothing and that everything has its origin and meaning of existence in the Almighty Creator God. Let us reflect on the confession of hope of the heroes and heroines of faith in the following.

First: The faith of Abel, Enoch and Noah (4-7).

Consider verse 4: "By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead." Abel's faith was the sacrificial faith. Because of the Fall, man's relationship with God was broken. But Abel held fast to the confession of God's hope, so he offered a sacrifice pleasing to God from the firstlings of his flock. God was greatly pleased with Abel's bloody sacrifice and graciously accepted it.

Let's look at verse 5: "By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God." Enoch's faith was that he lived a godly life in a fallen, godless world and held fast to the confession of God's hope in all circumstances. God rejoiced in this faith of Enoch, so God raptured him from this world and he was seen no more.

Touched by Enoch's magnificent faith, the writer passes on an exceedingly important message regarding faith in verse 6. Let's read verse 6: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." We must believe that God is. As believers, we actively seek God's nearness and communion with Him. We know in every situation of life, God is there. God helps us to live by faith even in an impossible situation by holding fast to the confession of hope. God will give us, despite contempt and persecution in the world, his reward in his time:

eternal life in his glorious and eternal kingdom! But without faith it is impossible...! Without faith it is impossible to pioneer 1,700 universities in Europe. Without faith it is impossible to establish 120 mission base camps. Without faith it is impossible to see the spiritual revival in this generation. Without faith, it is impossible to form 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams. Without faith, it's impossible to raise up an Abraham, a Sarah of faith, and 12 disciples of Jesus on each campus. Without faith, it's impossible to study medicine and computer science at the same time. Without faith, it's impossible to build a blessed house church for the mission of God. Above all, without faith, it's impossible to please God. This year, let us learn the faith pleasing to God in all things, that whatever we do, be it big or small, inconspicuous things, we do it all by faith. With such faith, let us hold fast to the confession of hope and please God.

Let's look at verse 7: "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith." In Noah's time, people had fallen away from God and sinned exceedingly. They married according to their desire. People were living a carnal life instead of a spiritual life. God's heart was so broken that He repented of having created human beings. God commanded Noah to build a huge ship, the ark, in which all kinds of animals, as well as Noah and his family, would be housed and survive during the flood. Noah obeyed by faith. Noah held fast to the confession of hope and did everything God commanded him to do.

Second: The faith of Abraham and his descendants (8-22).

Let's read verses 8-10: "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going." Abraham's faith begins with obedience. God called Abraham when he was a 75-year-old childless man. It was an expression of God's hope that God called Abraham.

Abraham's greatness was that he went off in obedience of faith and came to the Promised Land. Once there, he waited 25 years for the promised descendant. It was humanly absolutely impossible that Abraham, finally 100-years-old, and Sarah, 90-years-old, would have another descendant. Abraham and Sarah held fast to the confession of God's hope under all circumstances. They believed that God was faithful and would fulfill His promise. Let us read verses 11.12: "And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore."

Abraham, Sarah and all the patriarchs of faith lived by faith and held fast to the confession of hope that they aspired to an eternal inheritance not in this world but in the one to come. Abraham received a great promise from God of a father of many nations. But he did not think that God had to give him a great estate or a lasting city in this world. Abraham's hope was the eternal city in the kingdom of God. Let us read verses 13 -16: "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." The true hope of believers is never in this world! Like the patriarchs, we believe and wait for the heavenly Fatherland. Therefore, we may hold fast to the confession of hope and testify that we are but sojourners and strangers on earth. Our true, lasting fatherland is the Kingdom of God. With this living hope, we commit our earthly lives to fulfilling the mission entrusted to us and to inviting young people at universities and colleges into the eternal Kingdom

of God. With faith in the eternal Fatherland, let us hold fast to our confession of hope and live as holy pilgrims until we attain that which is promised.

Third: Moses' faith and the faith that overcomes the world (23-40)

Consider verse 23: "By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict." Moses was born at a time when the Egyptian Pharaoh had ordered all the newborn babies of the Hebrews to be killed and thrown into the Nile. However, Moses was hidden by faith of his parents for three months. God led it that Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and thus grew up in the Egyptian royal court. There he received an excellent education and grew up to become the prince of Egypt.

Consider verses 24-26: "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." Moses made a decision of faith to belong to the people of Hebrews. Humanly, he lost everything. Humanly, he now had to suffer immensely. But in truth, he gained everything because he received God's reward, eternal life. Verse 27 says, "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible." For Moses, a 40-year period of "desert training" began. After 40 years, God called him to challenge Pharaoh with ten plagues to acknowledge the God of Israel. But Pharaoh hardened his heart. Then God announced the killing of all the firstborn of man and cattle. Only the Israelites who would slaughter a Passover lamb and paint the lamb's blood on their doorposts were to be spared. Verse 28 speaks of this: "By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel." Thus

the Israelites were saved from the plague of death. Let's read verse 29: "By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned." Moses planted the faith in the people that allowed them to cross the Red Sea so that they escaped from slavery. With the same kind of faith, a young man who could not complete his studies to the end for many years was allowed to victoriously challenge the Red Sea of his graduation. When he fully trusted in the Word of God Mark 11:22 and God's people persistently prayed for him, he was allowed to cross that Red Sea and gain the victory of faith. Let us pray that with such faith he may cross the Red Sea of his now beginning professional training, job search and move to Bonn, gain the victory of faith and be used as a Bible teacher and preacher of the Word of God.

In the time of the judges there were great heroes of faith who are mentioned in verses 32-38. Let us read these verses: "And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated - the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground." These heroes and heroines of faith, on the one hand, were ordinary people and possessed various weaknesses. But when they trusted in God and held fast to the confession of hope, they became strong in faith and overcame their respective

situations. The overcoming faith of the heroes of faith is great. However, this faith does not mean that through faith everything would always go smoothly and that we would always receive only blessings. Certainly, some have received their dead back through faith. However, others have endured martyrdom because they wanted to obtain the resurrection, which is better. This clearly shows that the true and living hope of all believers is never this earthly world, but the future and heavenly one. Whether someone put to flight a foreign army, or was mistreated and killed, both witnessed their confession of hope and attained the future and heavenly world, the Kingdom of God.

Let us look at verses 39,40: "These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect." What does the writer mean by the "better thing" that God has provided for us? It is the resurrection of our earthly, perishable bodies and the true, lasting inheritance of the Kingdom of God. This was the confession of hope with which all the heroes of faith of the Old Covenant lived. This is also the confession of all the men and women of faith who have lived with and served God over the past 2000 years. This may and must also be our personal confession of hope: that we are guests and strangers on this earth, but that through our Lord Jesus we have the true, well-founded and living hope of the eternal Kingdom of God. When our Lord Jesus returns, the believers of the Old and New Covenants will be resurrected and enter the eternal kingdom of God together with us, who are still alive and who will be transformed in a moment into a glorious resurrection body. Apostle Paul testifies to this hope in 1 Corinthians (15:51, 52), "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." Because we now have such a glorious and living hope: Let us always hold fast the confession of hope. We have access into the eternal

kingdom of God through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. We may, like all the countless forefathers of faith who so encourage us with their heroic faith, believe absolutely in God's faithfulness and, like them, hold fast to the confession of hope. Their footsteps of faith we may follow with all patience to the end. Instead of being discouraged by the godless world and by the adversaries and retreating, we may live by faith, moving on daily and gaining the glorious victory of faith in the

spiritual conquest of Germany, Europe and the M world.

Today we have learned to hold fast to the confession of hope to the end. Our God is faithful. He has opened for us, through Jesus, the new living way to our eternal home of the Kingdom of God. Now, like the great ancestors of faith, we may overcome this corrupt and sinful world day by day with overcoming faith.