

LET US HOLD FAST 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."

Praise Let us thank God for this blessed May Bible Conference 2022. God has gathered us this weekend under His word from Hebrews: "Let us look up to Jesus!" Who is this Jesus? In our days, many people think of Jesus as some historical person who has little or nothing to do with their lives. But the author of the Letter to the Hebrews clearly points out the majesty and uniqueness of Jesus, so that in all circumstances we look up and hold on to Jesus, who is higher than angels, men, prophets, and also higher than Moses. No one but Jesus alone is the sure and firm anchor of our soul. Only he is the high priest in eternity, who has accomplished the work of redemption for all people through his unique and perfect atonement on the cross. Let us always look up to this Jesus and fight the good fight of faith with patience and to the victorious end.

Today's text teaches us how to live with the wonderful grace of God. Because Jesus is the new and living way into the kingdom of God through his sacrificial death on the cross, we believers are allowed to live a completely new life in Christ. This life has nothing in common with the old and sinful life. Through the numerous forefathers of faith (in chapter 11), let us learn with what confession of hope we too may patiently fight our race of faith and receive the victorious crown of life in the eternal Kingdom of God. Through the example of faith of the numerous forefathers of faith, let us learn patience and faith, reject all oppositions, persecutions and temptations of this world, and lead an overcoming, victorious life of faith with all patience.

I. Have patience so that you may receive what is promised (10:19-39)

Let's look at chapter 10:19-21: "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 words "Therefore, brothers and sisters...". The author 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..." No man could enter the kingdom of God by his own works or by his own righteousness. Because of the tremendous power of sin, all people without exception were condemned to failure to establish a relationship with God. No one, not even one, could enter the kingdom of God by his own effort or merit. The high priest went to the sanctuary of the tabernacle once a year. There he asked God - through the blood sacrifice of bulls and goats - for atonement of sins. But people are incurably and incorrigibly sin-sick. None of their sacrifices - not even the annual sacrifice of the high priest on the Day of Atonement - failed to solve mankind's fundamental sin problem.

But what did God do? He prepared a magnificent plan of salvation for us sinful human beings. He established Jesus 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 for eternity. Jesus gave Himself on the cross as the true, perfect sacrificial lamb. Through this sacrificial lamb, the curtain into the Holy of Holies was parted once and for all from top to bottom. How could this curtain, which was about 10 cm thick, be torn at all? 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 extremely costly path, we have indeed received the freedom and privilege to enter into the Holy of Holies of God, attain perfect 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 through 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 the Letter to the Hebrews is addressing Christians of Jewish descent, who were increasingly persecuted at the 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 these very believers, "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..." I.e., "yes, without fail; hold fast to Jesus and to his work of salvation! For he is faithful who promised it (the living hope)!" We live in a time of fundamental change in the history of the world. It is easy to abandon the spiritual values of biblical teaching and the biblical view of values and the world and simply adapt to the spirit of the times. What a frivolity this is! This is all the more serious for us and for the believers of the next generation. At a time

when war, crises, catastrophes and persecutions are on the increase, we easily become irritated and lightly suppress God's work and grace. Thus, many lose their confession of hope. But the writer encourages us, "Let us hold fast to 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! Hold fast to the confession of hope. Do not waver! Rely absolutely on God's unchanging faithfulness!"

Because God is faithful, we may pray and struggle spiritually unceasingly with the promise of God from Ezekiel 37:10 / Nehemiah 2:17 to form 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams and pioneer all 1,700 campuses in Europe. Because our God is faithful, we may prepare to establish the 120 missionary bases in the M-world. Because God is faithful, I may also fulfill my mission as a shepherd and Bible teacher until the end, at the Rhine-Sieg campus, in East Germany, in the M-world and to the ends of the earth. Because God is faithful, I may intercede unceasingly for the young people entrusted to me and pray for Olaf, for Kai, for Noah and David, that God will fulfill His promise also in their lives and set them up and use them preciously as Bible teachers and as spiritual leaders for this generation.

Let's look at verses 24,25: "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 in distress to take care of one another; to incite one another to brotherly love; not to leave 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 to brotherly love and good works to serve their friends and fellow Christians with the Word of God. We see the work of God through GLEF and through the online mission. Taking care of each other is a vital task of believers in the whole church. Instead of being indifferent, we may be spiritually alert and filled with a spirit of prayer to serve and spiritually help our brothers and sisters in faith with practical help and care, especially those who have become weak in faith because of challenges and afflictions.

Let us look at verses 26-31. In this passage the author warned the believers very seriously not to sin willfully. Whoever consciously 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 much 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 great struggle of faith. They had been confronted with the unbearable body of Christ immediately after they had become believers. They had become a spectacle themselves, in part, through taunts and afflictions. They had suffered with the prisoners, even endured the robbery of their goods with joy. All this they took upon themselves because, as verse 34b says, they would possess a better and lasting possession. 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 author reminded them of this earlier victorious faith struggle and encouraged them to hold on to

it instead of being impatient now and relativizing their earlier faith struggle by falling away from the faith.

Let's look at verses 35,36: "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 Christians of Jewish descent? They should not throw away their trust and patiently 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 difficult. But what if the marathon runner were to stop just before the finish line for a glass of fresh water and thus miss the finish line? But this is exactly what believers do when they stop their race of faith on the way and reject the precious grace of God in order to occupy themselves with trivial and transitory things of life. Paul admonishes such believers in verse 36a: "You need to persevere ...". Patience is an important virtue for all believers. We wait patiently for the glorious day of the return of our Lord Jesus. Until then, we patiently sow the seed of the Gospel by preparing the environment for God's work, for example, through early morning prayer, one-to-one Bible study teams, and life fellowship. Patiently, we run the good fight of faith like a marathon runner who keeps the goal in mind at all times and runs toward the finish line with all patience. Our Lord Jesus Himself is the goal to which we will go at the end of our lives.

Let's look at verse 39: "But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved." Shrinking back in the spiritual life has an exceedingly tragic consequence: whoever backslides will be damned. We, who are called by 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 teachings and false spirits of this world, such as humanism, relativism and hedonism. Whoever retreats or gives up in this struggle loses exceedingly - he will

even be condemned. Let us personally listen to Paul's exhortation, warning and encouragement and not retreat, but patiently fight the good fight of faith to the end. 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. Despite misunderstandings and persecutions, 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, even in the midst of the godless and humanistic spirit of the times. Thus, they serve the young people and experience the work of the Word of God through the raising of 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, opening up 1,700 universities in Europe, and establishing 120 mission bases to the M-world. Let us not shrink back from serving the disciple-making work through the life community and sending out 100,000 missionaries to all countries by 2041.

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, did not waver, and testified by their faith that God is faithful. Let's look at verse 1: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." Here the writer gives a definition of faith in two parts. On the one hand, directed to the future, faith sees the future already now as reality. On the other hand, related to the present, 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 were able to 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 from nothing, as Genesis 1:1 testifies: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This belief represents the foundation of faith. May God give us firm faith in creation, through which we can clearly see day by day that the world was created by the Word of God. The faith in creation sees that all things have come from nothing and that everything has its origin and its meaning of existence in the Almighty Creator-God. Let us further reflect on the confession of the hope of faith.

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

Verse 4 says, "By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel 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, so that God raptured Enoch from this world and he was seen no more.

Touched by Enoch's great faith, the writer testifies in 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 here. God helps us to live by faith even in an impossible situation and to hold on to the confession of hope. 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 bases. Without faith it is impossible to see the spiritual revival in this generation. But if we have faith pleasing to God, we can form 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams and by faith raise up an Abraham, a Sarah of faith, and 12 disciples of Jesus on campus. This word, Hebrews 11:6, is my theme for the year. I was allowed to repent of trying to live a life pleasing to God out of self-trust. With my own good will or effort, I cannot serve the pioneering work, let alone raise up disciples of Jesus. But by faith in the almighty and living God, I may please God and boldly challenge all things by faith: the pioneering work, forming one-to-one Bible study teams with the students and making disciples of Jesus.

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. Instead of living a spiritual life, they lived carnally. God's heart was broken that He repented of having created human beings. He 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. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." 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 at 100 years and Sarah, 90 years old, would still have a descendant. But 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.

Abraham, Sarah and all the patriarchs of faith lived by faith and held on to the confession of hope that they were striving for an eternal inheritance not in this world but in the one to come. Abraham received from God a great promise 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 only guests and strangers on earth. Our true, lasting Fatherland is the Kingdom of God. With this living hope, we dedicate 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. By faith in the eternal Fatherland, we may 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 newborn babies of the Hebrews to be killed and thrown into the Nile. But Moses was hidden by faith from 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." When Moses made a decision of faith to belong to the people of the Hebrews, he lost everything humanly and suffered 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 sprinkle the lamb's blood on their doorposts were to be spared. Verse 28 speaks of this: "By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned." 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 such faith, a student who could not complete his studies 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 his "Red Sea" and gain the victory of faith. Let us pray that Olaf may cross the Red Sea of his training with such faith, 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;^[a] they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goat-

skins, 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 were, on the one hand, ordinary people and possessed various weaknesses. But when they trusted in God and held on 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 gotten their dead back through faith. But others have suffered 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 a foreign army to flight, or was mistreated and killed, both have 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" that God has planned for us? It is the resurrection of our earthly, perishable body and the true, lasting inheritance of the Kingdom of God. This was the confession of hope with which 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 and served God in 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 comes again, 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 into a glorious resurrection body in a moment's time.

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 hold fast to the confession of hope.

Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we have access into the eternal kingdom of God. Like all the countless forefathers of faith who so encourage us with their heroic faith, we may absolutely believe in God's faithfulness. We may follow their footsteps of faith with all patience to the end. Instead of being disheartened by the godless world and the adversaries and retreating, we may live by faith, move on daily and achieve the glorious victory of faith in the spiritual conquest of Germany, Europe and the M-world.

Let us pray that God will use this historic May Bible Conference as a starting point for the spiritual renewal and revival of our country and continent. Let us thank God for our true High Priest Jesus, who opened the new living way for us through His perfect redemptive work on the cross. Now we too - like countless heroes of faith before us - may overcome the moribund and sinful world day by day with overcoming faith. Therefore: Let us always hold on to the confession of hope and conquer the 1,700 universities in Europe through 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams, establish 120 mission bases and prepare the spiritual revival of this generation.