

Backbone Faith

Faith

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Bible Text: Hebrews 11:35-38

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Please turn to Hebrews 11 and we're going to conclude our series on Faith in chapter 11 and we'll see what God has for us tonight. It's very interesting, but yet, I believe much encouraging message tonight.

Let's all stand. Hebrews 11, run down to verse 35. We'll read that one verse and we'll pray for the Master's help tonight. This here in the house of God tonight, a good crowd and I thank God for that. Hallelujah. Look at what the Bible says in Hebrews 11:35,

“Women received their dead raised to life again.” But notice something, the Bible says,
“and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

That is a big contrast to all that we've read earlier. That's why we're talking tonight on this thought: Backbone Faith. Backbone Faith.

Father, I pray tonight that each of us would leave here with backbone faith. I pray, God, we leave tonight understanding great truth, that sometimes deliverance is not the way that we expect for deliverance to be, but nonetheless, it's deliverance. And I pray, God, as we read about these individuals and as you begin to enlighten us, I want this thought, I pray, God, that each of us would just continue to grow and grow and grow. I pray, God, faithfulness will increase as we read each verse, as each word is spoken forth. I pray, God, we find ourselves getting stronger and stronger and stronger. And for that, God, we'll thank you.

I pray, God, that each of us will leave with excitement about serving Jesus, realizing that you are the Master of this universe and that no matter what we face in this life, we win. We win on this side and we win on the other side. I pray, God, to guide my speech and

my mind and my thoughts. I pray, God, that you'd help me to preach your Word as you'd have me to preach it. Then, I ask this, too, that anything whatsoever that might be between you and I would not be a hindrance. I pray, God, that you forgive me. I pray, God, that you cleanse me and wash me and then make me pliable, make me usable and for that, God, I'll personally shout, "Hallelujah!"

Help somebody tonight because I have no doubt in my mind that there is somebody that needs some help, I know I do. With that, God, we'll thank you. And if we left anything else out, yes Sir, meet that great need, too, and we'll praise your sweet name. That's about it, Lord. Bless all we do tonight. Bless the fellowship and everything. It is in Christ's name that we pray, Jesus. Amen.

Backbone faith. The Bible says, "women received their dead unto life again." We've covered that already but then the Bible says "and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." These are believers who had backbone faith. Their faith was not based upon good conditions. Their faith was not based upon everything going well in their life. Their faith, my friends, was a strong faith. It's a non-surrendering faith. It was a faith that did not give up. They did not quit in spite of the fact that the earth they might've seen, key word "seen," was going against them.

This word we're referring to is "backbone." It simply means "courage." Not only courage but it means "determination." Some of the synonyms are "firmness," it means "to have heart," it means "to have guts," it means "to have spunk," it means "to have stamina." If you're saved, born-again, you need this. You and I need stamina. You and I need courage. You and I need a backbone that doesn't quit but it keeps on going. That's when deliverance doesn't come in the sense of being delivered from the lions' den, but when the lions will tear you apart, you still have faith. You still have confidence in God Almighty.

This is not what we normally put on a big billboard when we say, "Accept Christ as your Savior." What we normally say is, "Accept Christ as your Savior and everything will be wonderful. Everything is going to be wholesome. It's going to be good." Have you ever had a few trials and a few tribulations? But, man, what deliverance, what rescue. But we need to check our history. Check the history of Christianity. Check the history before Christ came on the scene. Many of our brothers and sisters lost their lives. I encourage you to read Foxe's Book of Martyrs. When you read Foxe's Book of Martyrs you will find out about all of those whose heads were chopped off. Those who were put in ships and as they were put in ships, women and children were put in ships and then onshore they would shoot arrows that had fire on the end of those arrows. Those arrows would hit the ship and it would cause the ship to be set on fire and these men and women and young boys and kids were burned alive.

But all they had to say was they renounced their faith. Just simply renounce it. Just say, "No, no, I don't believe that anymore." There was a time when folks lost their lives because, and I'm not trying to attack anyone, but I'm just telling you the statements from facts here, when they would have the Lord's Communion or the Lord's Supper and they

would have that wafer and they would believe that wafer actually would turn into the very body of Jesus Christ, that the wine that they would drink would actually become the blood of Jesus Christ and they were told that's not the truth, that's not what the Bible teaches. Christ is not dying all over again. Christ is not being broken all over again but do you know what they were called? They were called "heretics" and because they were called "heretics" they would lose their lives. But, if they would just simply say, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute, I'm sorry. You're right. Everything is all right. Some of us, we'll reason this thing out. I will tell them it's okay but, God, you know I don't believe that but I'm going to say it's okay so they don't kill me." You see, something is wrong with that type of faith. That's not a backbone type of faith.

Let's look at what the Bible says here. First of all, the Bible shows us that faith and all that is going to fall under here, that faith is costly. It costs to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, the Bible shows us that sometimes we may be tortured. Some were tortured. The Bible says back in verse 35 that others were tortured. Notice, "not accepting deliverance." All they had to do, as I said before, was renounce what they believed but they would not accept that type of deliverance so, therefore, they were tortured.

The Bible shows also that some were mocked and scourged. Look at what it says in verse 35 again, "they were tortured, not accepting deliverance." Why? "That they might obtain a better," a nobler, "resurrection," which means being raised to life. Let me pause here for a second. That resurrection means raised to life. That means this: even though they may have lost their physical life here, they knew that "to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord." You see, for us, we think about death, we think about ending. It's all over with but, my friends, if you are a believer and if you are Christ's, your life doesn't stop here. It's just beginning, my dear friends, because as soon as your eyes close on this side, the Bible says, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." Where is Jesus? On the right hand of the Father.

So, in other words, when it comes my time to die, you have my funeral, please do cry, or they'll say you didn't miss me. But don't cry because "poor me." No, no, no, just cry because you'll miss me. Amen? But rejoice, my friends, because I'm going to be up in heaven, my friends, rejoicing with the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

That's like somebody said and you've heard me say this before: a person told me that they were going to rob someone saying, "Give me your wallet or I'm gonna kill ya." I simply said to that person, "Don't threaten me with that." Don't threaten me with heaven. Amen. Do you know what? Some of us aren't there yet. We think about, "Lord, give me some more time." Folks, when you leave here, it's just beginning. Think about no more sorrow. No more tears. No more heartaches. No more pain. No more suffering. None of that stuff. No more. Where it's always, "Howdy, howdy," and never "Good bye." What a place!

The Bible says they wouldn't accept deliverance because they're going to have a better resurrection, a more noble resurrection. Then the Bible goes on to say this in verse 36, "And others had trial of cruel mockings." That word "trial" means "testing." "Of cruel

mockings.” That means derision. “And scourgings,” meaning whipped. If somebody mocked us, we’d start crying. You say, “Well, y’all are Christians. Y’all Holy Rollers. All that emotionalism.” “Why are they talking about me? They’re talking about me.” What is the old saying? “Sticks and stones may break my bones but,” what? “Words will never hurt me.” But they do hurt. Some of us would rather have sticks and stones, but wait a minute, if somebody attacks you for being a Christian, man, don’t be sad but thank God that they even recognize that you are a believer. You know? I mean, somebody doesn’t go to the company Christmas party and they get upset. Not realizing, this is why they don’t want to come because you know what they’ll be doing. They’re going to be around that so we won’t ask them. We get our feelings hurt. “They didn’t ask me. Why did they ask them? They’re Christians?” I don’t know what that’s about. It hasn’t got anything to do with me.

But it does tell you something about somebody’s testimony. Some believers, they’ll go to and they’ll say, “Well, they’re alright.” Why don’t they say that you’re alright? Why are they gossiping with you? Because you’re embracing it. You’ve been encouraging it? Dear friends, when we get mocked and all that kind of stuff, we fall apart but the Bible says here, “And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds,” shackles, “and imprisonment.” Think about the disciples: they went to prison. They weren’t sad, they were excited. Paul and Silas, they were singing duets. They were singing down there. I mean, think about it: in prison, about to lose their lives and they were singing, “Glory, glory, hallelujah.” I mean, they were praising the Lord. Man, we go to jail and we’ll be jailbirds. If you go to jail for preaching the gospel, because that time is coming, by the way, you won’t be able to preach against sin no more. They’ll say, “Well, you’re judging. You’re intolerant,” and all that kind of stuff. Listen, I’m going to preach this book until the day I die because, you know what? There’s nobody on this earth that paid for my soul. There is one person that bought me and paid for me and his name is Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Hallelujah. I’m going to preach, “Thus saith the Lord.”

The Bible says right here, “bonds and imprisonment.” The Bible says, “they were stoned, they were sawn asunder.” That word “sawn asunder” means “to be sawed in two.” There were folks who were cut in half. I mean, they were bringing out the axe, a real axe, somebody is going to chop a head off. Don’t do that. You all remember John the Baptist? He was talking to the wife of a king, “King, it ain’t lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” And she didn’t like that and they had him put in jail. And then what happened? She had her daughter come out and her daughter danced before the King and then the King enjoyed her dancing and then he said, “You can have anything you want up to half the kingdom,” something like that. And her mother already told her, “We want John’s head on a platter.” He liked John; he was a little scared of John, too but I guess he was more scared of his wife. Like some of us. They go down there, they get John and what do they do? They chop his head off and bring it on a platter. Good preacher. I like him. Talking about we’re going to heaven now.

I’ve heard this said before: he was preaching about John the Baptist, he said when they came to cut John the Baptist’s head off, I’m not reading the Bible but I just like it because

it sounds good, but it said that he was preaching and when they came down to cut John the Baptist's head off, John stuck his neck out, "Go ahead. Chop it off." They go and chop his head off and the name of the sermon was "John didn't shake." Somebody find that, I've been trying to find it. I've got to find it because it was a good message. He said, "John didn't shake. John didn't quit. John didn't give up." They brought John's head on that platter and the Bible says it did come on a platter but this part here, I just like it, it's not in the Bible but I like it: he said they brought John's head on that platter and as they brought his head on the platter to the King, somebody said, "Look! Look! His mouth is moving." And then somebody said, "Mouth moving? See what he's saying." And he said they put their ear down near John's mouth on that platter and they said they heard these words, "I didn't shake." I tell you what, that just stirs me up every single time! I'll tell you this, my friends, one thing is for sure: John didn't shake because John kept saying, "King, it ain't right. King, it ain't right." They put him in jail and he lost his head but he's up in heaven. Glory, hallelujah! That's backbone faith.

He didn't say, "King, I'm sorry. I missed it. Do you what you need to do. That's your business. I ain't got nothing to do with that. To each his own. I ain't judging." Listen, if you're sinning, you're sinning. Bottom line. When somebody says, "Stop judging. Don't judge me," they're saying, "Shut up and leave me alone." That's what it means. And guess what we do? Don't say nothing.

We've got too much Bible. Too much Bible. It says "warn." We'll go over there to 1 Thessalonians and warn the unruly. It tells us, my dear friends, to warn folks. If you warn somebody it means they won't take the wrong road. If you were going down a one-way street and I knew it, what am I going to do? Say, "Go ahead. I ain't gonna judge ya." They see a truck coming but, "I ain't gonna judge ya. I'm not going to tell you you're going the wrong way because I ain't judging you." What would you do if it were your Momma in that vehicle? You'd say, "Momma! Momma!" "Boy, get out of my way." "Momma! I ain't gonna let ya go down that road." You're going to try to stop them because you don't want her to get into a wreck.

But the world is using the Bible and they still aren't using the right context either, but they are misusing it to get us not to say anything. When you have backbone faith, it doesn't bother you about folks. As a matter of fact, you know they're going to talk about you. You know they're going to criticize you. These folks had backbone faith.

Look what it goes on to say: the Bible says this, "they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain," that means death, "with the sword." Then the Bible says this: not only were some tortured, some mocked and scourged, some had chains in prison, some were treated horrendously, but some were deprived of necessities. Think about that for a second. The Bible says, "they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." That goes against mainly what we preach sometimes. "He's going to deliver you, girl." He's going to deliver you. What did the Hebrew boys say when he was about to be thrown into the fiery furnace? Let's read it.

Daniel 3. I thought it was about the lions' den and we'll see. Alright, good job, brother. Daniel 3, drop down to verse 16, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able," he has the ability, he has the power, "to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." We're getting out of your hand, "But," that's the part we don't want to hear, "But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." He is able, but if not, if he chooses not to, we're still not going to bow down.

And we've got a lot of brothers and sisters who did not bow down. They lost their heads. They were chopped in half. They were burned at the stake. Read Foxe's Book of Martyrs but before you read it, pray. You need to pray first. If you read it and you don't pray first, you'll be mad. You'll be ticked off. You'll want to whup somebody and I'm not saying who you're going to want to whup but pray first. Pray first. There is one guy, they put him on that stake and they set the fire and the fire went up part of his body and then it went out and the ropes kind of came off and they had to restart the fire. They were going to put the ropes back on him and do you know what he said, "That's alright. I don't need that." And they set that fire and he just stood there and began to sing songs while he's burning at the stake. You see, folks, that's backbone faith. You say, "Well, he wasn't delivered." Yes he was. "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."

And, by the way, we are still talking about those Thessalonians, those men and women who gave their lives willingly when they could have gotten deliverance. Somebody says, "Well, you know what, I'm going to do what you said to do. I renounce this. I renounce that. I'm going to pray for this person even though I know the Bible says not to pray to them, I'm going to still pray to them." That's all they had to do but they would not and they lost their lives, so to speak, but they didn't.

Watch this. Go back over there, we're almost done. Look at what the Bible says here: we see that faith is very costly. The Bible says they were afflicted, they were tormented. And the Bible says in verse 38, "Of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts," in the wilderness, "and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise." What? We're talking about the Old Testament saints. They were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. In other words, all these folks died before they actually saw Jesus Christ come on the scene. See, we look back on what Christ has done and now we're looking forward to his return again if we don't go by the grave first, but these Old Testament saints they were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. But, guess what? They all died before he came.

By the way, many of us are looking for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ but many of us are going to die before he comes. He's still coming. By the way, the Bible says, verse 39, "And these all, having obtained a good report," those words "having a good report" are one word which means "a good testimony; a good witness." The Bible says "received not the promise: God having provided," that means in advance, "some

better thing for us.” Now he’s talking about all of us, but watch this, “that they without us should not be made perfect.” Not made perfect? That’s why the Bible says “study to be approved unto God as workmen that you not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Those three words “be made perfect,” one word which means “complete.” The Old Testament saints are not complete without us. “What are you talking about?”

Go with me to Revelation 6:11. Look at what the Bible says here. Start in verse 9, the Bible says this, “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” The Bible says, “And white robes were given unto every one of them.” Watch it, watch it, “and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season,” why? “Until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” You’ve got to wait for the whole family to get here. You see, there are some others that are coming soon. We’re not going to do this thing without them. I like that.

Folks, we are all part of a body of Christ. We all complete one another and God says, “You know what? I’m going to take care of that thing when the rest of them get up here who are on their way.” You know what? Since the Old Testament saints have died, we have a lot of New Testament saints who have also died. By the way, if you read Voice of the Martyrs, you need to pray first and read that. There are brothers and sisters right now, today, who are losing their lives for simply being Christians. Losing hands and losing legs and losing feet just because they are Christians. And all they’ve got to do is denounce the Lord Jesus Christ but they’re dying.

A friend of ours, I knew him, he came out of church and he’s from Cuba and he talks about how when Castro took over and how a lot of them were imprisoned because they were Christians and they were trying to say that they were CIA agents and stuff like that but they knew they were just believers, they were Christians. They would put them in prison and a lot of them would lose their lives, a lot of them would die. A lot of them were put in awful situations but continued to serve God even in prison. He talked about how one guy, all he had was a page of the Bible and when they came to search his cell, he had hidden it and they found it and do you know what they did? They chopped off his hand but he still had a portion of God’s Word. Just a portion, just to be able to read. We’ve got a whole Bible.

So, I’m talking about folks today who are dying simply because they are believers. Those folks have backbone faith. We suffer a little ridicule and we just suffer, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry.” Come on. Did anybody slap you? “They better not slap me, I tell you what.” But some of them let folks slap them. Now, I’m not going to say I’ve got that type of faith but I’ve had doors slammed in my face. I’ve had folks say things to me when I’d be knocking on doors just trying to invite somebody to church. I’ve had folks cuss me out. But what do lost people do? Lost things. You expect the person that is lost to be upset, to be angry. They do lost things. It’s amazing how God gives you the strength to face these things when they come upon you. I have had people spit on me but, guess what? I was in

church. There are some believers that aren't going to like you either. They don't like the way you worship. They don't like the way you exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. They might not like your skin either or your nationality. What are you going to do? I serve him. I serve the King of kings and the Lord of lords, my dear friends, and it is him that gives me peace in my soul and joy in my heart. Ain't nothing like having God's peace. Ain't nothing like having God's joy. You can face a lot of things when you've got that. When you haven't got God's joy and you haven't got God's peace, do you know what you are? Miserable. "What are you looking at? What are you smiling about? Ain't nothing funny." You're mean. "What are you singing for? Stop that singing." You got the devil in you, don't you? But the saint hasn't got the devil in him but I'll tell you what, the devil will ride his back. "Giddy up! Giddy up!" Get that devil off your back. I don't want the devil riding me. Get off me!

The Bible says this in James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." By the way, there is not one person in here that he hasn't ridden before. Some of you, he's riding today. You're out riding in the car and he's riding you. You will cuss somebody out this day on the job. You might not say it verbally but you were cussing him inside. My pastor said one time, "I ain't gonna cuss but if you put it down on a piece of paper, I'll sign my name to it." Don't let him ride you.

That's why what we need, go back with me, that's why we need this type of faith, backbone type of faith. Look at what it says here. The Bible says, "God having provided some better thing for us." God has something better for us. Remember, we will be rewarded. God will reward you for your faithfulness. God will reward you for staying true to him. By the way, how did Paul die? How did he die, Dennis? He had his head cut off. But he had much faith. Yeah, but he lost his head for Jesus Christ. How did Peter die, somebody? Crucified, upside down. The list goes on. Those disciples lost their lives but what does the Bible say, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul." See, they had an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ and once you have that, you won't ever be the same.

I know sometimes we get distant from him, but do you know what you need to do? Start running to him. By the way, that's why we have Jubilee so that we can get refueled because sometimes the tank gets empty. Sometimes you're riding on fumes and you're vehicle is going putt, putt, putt. You're going down the road putt, putt, putt. But I tell you what, you get to the gas station and go vroom! But, use your cruise control. It will help save on gas. Now, I'm not talking about not doing anything because don't you all do this: you can set that thing on cruise and go at a high rate of speed but you have it set on cruise. Do you know what that is? That's riding steady. If you have it on cruise, you're riding steady. But, you know what? If you haven't got it on cruise, you'll be running fast and you'll be slowing down. When I don't have it on cruise, I might go a little bit slower.

Do you know what we need more of? We need more steady Christians. More steady Christians. But even more than that, we need more Christians that have backbone, don't quit.

I've got two questions and one thought. First question is this: do you have backbone faith? Do you have backbone faith? Secondly, do you need backbone faith? Do you need it? Last one is a statement: if you have backbone faith, you will be rewarded.

Father, thank you for your many wonderful blessings. And, God, as we have gone from verse 1 down to verse 40, we have seen many different faces of faith. I pray, God, that you have given each of us certain things from these messages that have encouraged our faith, that have encouraged us to trust the Word. That's what we're trusting, the Word of God.

Father, help us to trust your promises and, perhaps God, there are some folks here tonight that would say this, "You know what? I need more backbone faith. Sometimes I find myself about to give in to the pressure. I find myself about to give in to the people. I find myself about to give in to the problems but, Father, help me to have backbone faith." And I pray, God, that whoever needs that type of faith tonight, will just simply come and say, "God, give it to me." I know what you'll do: you'll give it to them, Father. But also they'll be faced with the opportunity to exercise that backbone faith. And I pray, God, when it comes to that opportunity, I pray, God, that they exercise it by your power and by your strength.

Then, perhaps, there is someone here tonight that have other needs. Other needs that I have not mentioned, but I pray, God, that if they come tonight and ask you to fulfill that need. There might be somebody here tonight that doesn't know Christ as their Lord and their Savior. They know how to spell his name but Christ does not live in their heart. They have not repented of their sin nor trusted Christ as their Savior. I pray, God, that all they have to do is come or ask someone, ask me or someone they have confidence in, to please show me how to know Christ as my Savior. I don't want to die and go to hell, I want to die and go to heaven when my time comes. I pray, God, that they come. Whatever their needs are, help us respond the right way. In your Son's name we pray, Jesus. Amen.