

February 24, 2019

## A Better Resurrection

*Christ is Enough Series*

**Hebrews 11:23-40**

Pastor Bryan Clark

A little over twenty years ago Patty and I took a missions' trip to Guyana. Starting in Georgetown, we went up to a little village in the jungle called Lethem. There we crossed the river over into the jungles of Brazil, and somebody met us there. So all total the trip was about two weeks. Well, part of the problem when you're crossing from one country to another in the jungle, going across a river, is trying to keep all your passport stuff accurate—and we got all messed up. So we're in Lethem—the little village in the jungle—and they have one plane a day. This plane comes in; it lands; you have maybe five minutes to get on and it takes off—and if you aren't on it, then it's twenty-four hours before you get the next plane. Well, we had been gone two weeks; we were anxious to get home; the girls were little at that time and Patty was *ready* to be home. Well, the plane landed; there was a man at the bottom of the steps into the plane and he was about six foot six. He was a big guy; he had a scar that went all the way diagonally across his face; he was holding an automatic rifle, and he was in charge of checking tickets and passports. So we presented our tickets and passports and he immediately said, "You're not getting on the plane." (Our passports were all messed up.) Well, at that moment, I started to explain what had happened when Patty stepped up and she informed him that we were getting on the plane, "Get out of the way!" (*laughter*) He had come between a she-bear and her cubs. He looked into her eyes and he realized he did not have a gun big enough to keep us off that plane. (*laughter*) He stepped aside and we boarded the plane. Patty's typically pretty easy going, but I knew she had her game face on and she was headed home, and no one was going to stop her. That's what we want to talk about this morning.

If you have a Bible, turn with us to Hebrews 11—our third and last week in Hebrews 11. So *by faith* we opened the doors this morning, and here you are! In chapter 11 there are these great stories of faith that remind us that faith isn't just saying, "This is what we believe," but rather it's *believing* something to such a degree that it becomes the very *substance*—the very *foundation*—of our lives. Ultimately, as Christians, we understand the hope of the gospel is not that everything in this life is going to make sense or work out. It's that *we are headed to something better*. Our souls *long* for that. So many people, including so many Christians, try to satisfy that longing in their souls with the things of this world, thinking somehow this world can satisfy, can make me happy—this world is where it's at—and it can be a long and painful journey to finally realize this world just teases us. It just gives us moments but, at the end of the day, this world breaks our hearts again and again and again, and there's something deep within us that longs not just for something different but for something better. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—they all not only lived by faith, but they died in faith having never seen the promises fulfilled. They saw them and welcomed them from a distance but they understood that they were aliens and strangers in this world; they were unwilling to settle for the things of this world and knew that one day, by faith, they would be in a better city, in a place their souls longed for. We pick it up then in chapter 11, verse 23:

**By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. (\*NASB, Hebrews 11:23)**

It's a good reminder that what begins the Moses story is not Moses; it's Moses' parents, and their faith that saved his life. This is now hundreds of years beyond Joseph; there's a new sheriff in town. He notices the Hebrew people are thriving. He's fearful they're going to become too powerful so he orders that all male babies of the Hebrews be thrown into the river. So the parents of Moses have a decision to make—to obey the laws of the king or to obey God. Not fearing the king, by faith, they saved the life of Moses. When it says that **he was a beautiful child**, the word doesn't mean he was cute or pretty. It has more the idea that there was something special about this child and they knew it, and they were willing to risk their very lives to make sure that this child survived. Verse 23:

**By faith, Moses when he had grown up refused to called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. (Vs. 23-26)**

So Pharaoh's daughter raised Moses as her own; Moses literally grew up in the home of Pharaoh. The book of Acts tells us Moses was about forty years old at this point, so it could be worded *...when he had grown up or when he had become significant*. Moses would have been raised with the finest education; he would have been raised with all of the wealth, all of the power, all of the political and social power anyone could imagine. Tradition says Moses was in line to be the next Pharaoh. Whether or not that's true, Moses was a player in the house of Pharaoh. But there came a point when he had to make a decision. Either he was going to enjoy life in the house of Pharaoh with all the wealth, with all the power—with all of the potential of that—or he was going to identify with the people of God who were enslaved to a cruel pharaoh. There was no middle ground; he had to choose one or the other. It's really important to understand, we're not talking about potential, like someday he could be rich or perhaps he might be mistreated. He was already wealthy and powerful and he was *guaranteed* to be mistreated if he identified with the Hebrews. This was the choice he made **by faith**. Why did he make that? Because the text tells us: *rather than identifying with the passing pleasures of sin, rather than the temporary riches of Egypt, he understood the promise*. When it says that **considering the reproach of Christ greater riches....** (that word Christ was the word for anointed or Messiah), so exactly what all Moses understood, it's hard to say. What he understood is there was a promise, a promise made to the Hebrew people that one day this promised Messiah would come and, like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph before him, he would choose to believe that God *would* keep His promise and the reward of what God promised to him was greater than **the passing pleasures of sin, than the momentary riches of Egypt**. Moses really didn't have the option to walk the fence. He had to make a decision and the consequences would be severe. Most Christians down through history have not had the option to walk the fence. Most have had to make a decision—"in" or "out"—and the consequences many times would be severe.

One of the problems we wrestle with as American Christians is we can get away with living with one foot in the world, and one foot in the kingdom of God. There's still a part of us that thinks, "This world is going to make me happy; this world is where it's at; this world is what's going to make me significant." As I've said before, that can be a very long, painful road to finally realize, "This world just isn't going to cut it; it just breaks my heart and disappoints me again and again and again," and at some point we have to ask, "Which path do we want?" The temporary riches and pleasures of this world, or are we headed to something better with rewards that go beyond anything this world can offer? Verse 27:

**By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, (or persevered) as seeing Him who is unseen.**

Now there are some who think this is referring to when Moses killed an Egyptian and fled to Midian, and was gone for forty years before God sent him back. Well, that's certainly possible but it doesn't seem likely. He didn't really leave because of great faith; the text tells us he left because of great fear. But in this case I think he's referring to when Moses came back and stood before the Pharaoh and went through the plagues because God had called Moses to lead his people and set them free. The idea is that Moses, by faith, stood before the Pharaoh again and again and again. He believed in the One who is unseen. That's the very definition of faith in verse one—*the conviction of things unseen*—and verse 6—*those who come to God must believe that He is and He is a rewarder of those who seek Him*—which means you stand before Pharaoh, arguably the most powerful man in the world and you declare, "Let my people go," on the basis of the God of the Hebrews. How much faith does it take to do that? Moses persevered...he endured. Verse 28:

**By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.**

He either **kept** (or could be translated *instituted*) **the Passover**. The last of the plagues was that every firstborn male child in every home would die when the angel of death came over them, with the exception of those Hebrew families who chose, by faith, to paint the blood of an animal on the doorframe of their houses. Now stop and think about this. This is before the Law; this is before the old covenant; this is before the tabernacle—this is before any of that. These people had been born and raised in pagan Egypt, so what is necessary for Moses to convince them, by faith, to put it all on the line? Somebody's going to die this night and who are you going to believe? I mean the stakes were high—to believe that God tells the truth, do what He told you and, by faith...remarkably...they did it—and their firstborn was spared and the firstborn of the Egyptians perished! Verse 29:

**By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though *they were passing through on dry land*; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.**

They leave Egypt; the Pharaoh lets them go; they get to the Red Sea and they're stuck. The Pharaoh meanwhile changes his mind, assembles his army, and he is coming to get them, probably to slaughter them. If you go back and read the text, the people weren't really filled with faith. They were filled with grumbling and complaining. They said to Moses, "Is this the plan? You brought us out in the desert so we could die here? We'd rather be back in Egypt than die here!" So Moses cries out to God and God essentially says, "Let's go; Moses, raise your staff!" He parts the Red Sea and the people had to cross through. Now again, the emphasis in this whole chapter is that faith is not saying you *believe something*; faith is that *you believe it to such an extent it becomes the very substance, the very foundation of your life!* You actually *live that way!* It actually affects your decision; the stakes are high. Just imagine when the Red Sea parts—just the wonder and the intimidation of that—and, "Are we going to drown? What's going to happen? What's going on here?" We're talking about three million people, and in that moment they had to make a decision. "Who are we going to believe?" And really in that moment—with remarkable faith—they passed through the waters! The text also reminds us this isn't positive thinking; this isn't faith in faith. This is all about *who* is the object of your faith. The army of the Egyptians may have been very courageous, thinking they too could go through the waters. But their faith was not in God and God, in order to protect His people, allowed the waters to come back down and drown the army of the Egyptians. Verse 30:

**By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.**

So you remember in the story, the Hebrew people that came through the Red Sea, they were not a real faithful bunch. When they got to the land of promise, they were unwilling to believe God tells the truth. As a matter of fact, the writer of Hebrews talked about them in chapter three—talked about their disbelief and what it cost them. So that whole generation dies in the wilderness because of their lack of faith. They're not *Hall of Famers*. The only generation that would go in would be the *next* generation with Joshua and Caleb, but this was a generation ready to believe. There's a miraculous parting of the Jordan River; they cross through that, but then the strategy seems so crazy. "So here's what you do: you go and march around the walled city six days in a row," basically announcing, "We're here and we're going to attack," kind of the worst strategy possible! "On day seven go around it seven times and here's what you do: you blow your horn and the walls will come crashing down." Now again, the stakes are high; this is life and death stuff. How much faith does it take to believe that's what we need to do? It makes no sense whatsoever, other than, "*Does God tell the truth?*" When everything was on the line, remarkably they choose to believe, and God gives them an amazing victory. Verse 31:

**By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.**

So Rahab, the (whispered) *harlot!* It's interesting James uses Rahab also as an example of great faith, but he also labels her. Nobody's sweeping this under the carpet; nobody's whispering, "*By the way, she's a prostitute.*" Not a temple prostitute, a secular prostitute—this is how she made her living; it is what it is. Yet she had heard of the God of the Hebrews. It's a reminder: this is not about your performance; this is not about your past; this is not about what you've done or not done or what's been done to you. It's about *faith!* It's about whether or not you believe God tells the truth when He offers you salvation. Rahab had heard the stories, and in this moment she knew there's going to be a fight, and there's going to be a winner and there's going to be a loser. This is live or die; this is not sit around in a small group and talk about what you believe. This is like, "Some decision needs to be made because someone's going to die," and she chose to believe that the God of the Hebrews is the one true God! She took in the spies; she sheltered them; she protected them with the promise that when they returned, she would be spared. Well, of course God gives them a great victory; Rahab is spared; Rahab becomes part of the Hebrew people and becomes the great grandmother of the great King David. She also shows up in Matthew chapter 1, as what I refer to as one of the *Four Scandalous Women in the Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah*. A remarkable, heroic story of faith! If you're going to believe it, faith is believing it to such a degree you actually live like it. It becomes the substance, the foundation of our lives. It affects our values; it affects our choices; it affects our priorities. *We live like we actually believe it's true.* Now starting in verse 32, this reminds me of a preacher who has lots more to say, but is out of time. That's kind of how the text feels here.

**And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, (those are four judges) of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness they were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection... (Vs. 32-36a)**

I say, “Sign me up! That’s awesome! That list is unbelievable! Let’s trust God; let’s get out there; let’s conquer kingdoms; let’s win these great battles!” I read through that list and it is like, “*Sign me up; I’m in!*” But then it goes on:

**...and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (*men of whom the world was not worthy*), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.** (Vs. 36b-38)

To which I say, “Wait a minute...did I say sign me up? I didn’t really mean that!” We just want to believe so badly that if I trust God by faith everything is supposed to work out. That’s why we love the top half of Hebrews 11. We don’t like this last bit. Remember where the story started? The first example given was Abel who was murdered by his brother for his faith. Read the book of Acts. Peter is released; Stephen is stoned to death. All the apostles except one would ultimately die cruel, vicious deaths for their faiths. There is a reminder this world is not our home and this is a battle and the stakes are high. Verse 38 says: (*men of whom the world was not worthy*), in other words the world said, “You’re not even worthy to live,” to which God said, “Actually the world’s not even worthy of them.” So He takes them home—enough of this! When it says **others were tortured**, (that’s a word that means they put them on a rack to stretch them), **not accepting their release**, it basically means if they recanted, they could have gone free. But they were unwilling to recant. Why? Well the text tells us; **so they might obtain a better resurrection**. In other words what the text is saying is if they were released, in a sense they were going to die—so that’s a form of a resurrection. So okay, you’re still alive in this world; that’s the prize. So you’ve given up the better city in order to stay alive a little longer and then you still die. But it’s also going back to the first part of verse 35: **Women received back their dead...** Those resurrections like Lazareth and resurrections in the Old Testament, they were miraculous resurrections but those people still died. They were resurrected back to this life but they’re still going to die. And what the text is saying is, “That isn’t what was in their head. They were headed *home!* They were headed to a better place, a better city. They could see with eyes of faith; they were welcoming the fulfillment of the promise from a distance. They were unwilling to settle for *this world* because they were headed to *something better and something more*. They would not recant because they were headed home and *no one* was going to stop them. Verse 39:

**And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.**

So what does that mean? All of them died having never seen the fulfillment of the promise. They lived by faith; they died in faith, believing that God tells the truth, but they would have to believe it *by faith*. But they believed it so strongly that it *defined* the pathway of their lives and many of them would live difficult lives and die for what they believed to be true. But what the text is saying is all of the great heroes of faith who have gone on before us, they still have not yet received the promise. You say, “What are they waiting for?” “They’re waiting for us!” The first century Hebrew Christians—the first readers of this book—they’re still waiting. All of our loved ones and friends and those who have died in Christ, they’re still waiting. What are they waiting for? They’re waiting for us!

The idea is: this is a relay race and the baton is passed from generation to generation. But just like when you run a relay, just because your leg of the race is over doesn't mean the race is over. You've just passed the baton. Now the next runners are running their leg. Each individual in the relay race doesn't win until the final runner crosses the finish line. Then we win or lose—but we win or lose *together*. This is the amazing truth of what was just said. All of these great heroes of faith, they're still waiting in what we refer to as the intermediate heaven, for lack of better terminology. They're just in the presence of Jesus and they're waiting. What are they waiting for? They're waiting for the *return of Christ*. This has been identified as the center of the hope of the gospel in Hebrews. When Jesus returns, He will come with the spirits of those who have died. This body right here will be resurrected; it will be changed. This mortal will put on immortality and we will all enter into the new heaven and the new earth—the ultimate reward, the better city—together. That's what he just said there. Nobody's going on before; nobody's entering until we all enter together and in that moment, finally, after all this suffering and confusion and disappointment we will *finally* know, “This is what my soul has been longing for. This is what this world can never deliver. It's something different...it's something more!”

The music provided at my dad's funeral was the Back to the Bible choir because he had been head of the music department at Back to the Bible. The final song was a song written by Don Wyrzten called *Finally Home*. Listen to the lyrics of the chorus. I want you to think about these lyrics at the conclusion of twenty plus years of suffering:

Just think of stepping on shore, and finding it heaven  
Of touching a hand, and finding it God's  
Of breathing new air, and finding it celestial  
Of waking up in Glory, and finding it "Home"  
Finally Home!

***Finally we'll all be home.***

*Our Father, we are so thankful for the hope of the gospel, that Your word is very clear. This life gets really hard; it gets painful; it gets confusing; it gets disappointing. We just get glimpses of moments that we wish would last but they tease us and they go away. There's something deep in our hearts that says we want something more. Lord, we want a better city; we want a better home. God, may we as people of faith be pilgrims and strangers seeing the promise from a distance and believing, believing in such a way it defines the most ordinary and everyday decisions of our lives. God, may we be faithful until that day when we arrive home together with the saints of old to a place with no more tears, no more sorrow, no more pain and no more goodbyes. God, until that day, find us faithful. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

(Video):

*So May 29<sup>th</sup>, coming up, will be the third anniversary of losing my beloved husband. He had a long-term, ten-year illness with early-onset Alzheimer's from age 50 until he passed away. And so, that in itself was just a long road of a series of good-byes. So we'd been married 38 years before he passed away, and I feel like Joel was my rock and my support for so many years, and then it was my turn now to be his rock and his support, and what an honor and privilege that was. But at the same time it was the hardest thing I've ever had to walk through.*

*Losing the ability to remember names, losing the ability to find his way in a vehicle, he wasn't really able to interact or feed himself or care for himself, and so to be with someone you've loved deeply for so long and then to not have them there has probably been the hardest thing in my journey with Jesus in the last 30 years that I've known Christ.*

*A lot of people have asked me, "Well, why? Do you ask God why has this happened?" And Joel was the answer to that question. Early on, when he had moments of clarity and he knew his diagnosis of Alzheimer's, he would say, "Okay, honey, that's a diagnosis and that's what our story is going to be, so how are we going to glorify God through it?" So he was the rock even in that part of our life. He was all about Jesus, and, "How do we help others?" even through a horrible diagnosis. So he could say that, and be all over it and I'd agree, but then at the same point he said that, "The hardest thing for me is that you and our son have to walk this journey and I won't be able to help at some point and that just really breaks my heart. Jesus is going to have to be the main man in your life, and I know he has been, but now he's really going to have to be."*

*(Repeating of their wedding vows):*

*If you would repeat after me, "I, Joel, give thanks to God that twenty years ago He brought you, Marlys, into my life. I thank you for the love and loyalty you have shown to me. I now reaffirm to you my vow, to love and to cherish, to comfort and keep you, in sickness or health, through joys and sorrows, and by God's grace, in strength to continue to lead our lives, in obedience to His holy word, until the Lord shall take us to our heavenly home."*

*So, women, no matter where you're at or what our story is, Jesus has to be number one, because someday in your life, other people, your family, your friends, may not be there for whatever reason, and so how do we go about living with pain, but also living with great hope that there is eternal life in Christ and that's our ending? But meanwhile, back at the ranch, it's hard! And so for me in this, my story, I want to help the next widow to walk that journey and help her find that Jesus is sufficient and He truly can be the main man, and should be the main man in your life. And that really happens by faith—moment by moment, day by day—and that's a beautiful, beautiful thing! And I think the irony of the Christian life is that we have all this pain, but we have all this joy and hope—and how do we walk that well with our days here on earth until Christ returns?*

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE  
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988,  
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.  
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512  
Copyright 2019 – Bryan Clark. All rights reserved.



## Something Better

*Christ is Enough*

Hebrews 11:23-40

Pastor Bryan Clark

### Opening Discussion

1. In most places in the world throughout the past 2000 years being a Christian often meant significant challenges and even persecution. In twenty first century America one can claim to be a Christian and still fit into popular culture fairly well. Is this good or bad, and why? How might this confuse which world we're actually living for?
2. What does it mean to you to live by faith and if you do so, what are your expectations from God in return?

### Bible Study

1. Review the Hebrews definition of faith from 11:1. What does this mean in your own words?
2. Read Hebrews 11:23-31. What were the choices Moses made and why? Compare the story of Moses with 11:13-16. What did Moses see with eyes of faith that defined his life?
3. The temptation for us is to try to have our cake and eat it too. To live with one foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom of God. We can enjoy the passing pleasures of this world and still end up in heaven. What does James 4:1-4 say about friendship with the world? What does Moses teach us about how to live?
4. What is the result of faith according to this text? Is faith something we talk about or is it something that causes us to act? What does that mean for you?
5. Read Hebrews 11:32-38. What might be our experience if we truly walk by faith? What can we expect for sure? Isn't it true that part of what frustrates us in this life is the confusion between those who by faith experience verses 32-35a and those who by faith experience verses 35b-38? What have we learned in Hebrews 11 and what must we remember when we walk by faith?

