



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 11:32-40

“The Remnant of the Faithful”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures again, and we ask Thy blessing upon us as we turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews. Enable us to understand and profit from the things that we read and we pray especially, Lord, that the great message of this book of our Lord as our great High Priest, who continually makes intercession for us, may stay with us and not only for a short time after we leave our meeting but in the days that lie ahead for each of us. We thank Thee for the marvelous position that we enjoy; the marvelous possessions that we have in Jesus Christ, and the provisions that he has made for us. And we thank Thee, too, for the great hope that we have, which he has won for us by the ministry that he has accomplished and continues to accomplish. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt strengthen us for the days that lie ahead and we pray that by Thy marvelous grace we may be brought soon into thy presence to enjoy the fellowship that we have with the Triune God throughout the ages of eternity. We pray that our meeting this evening may be pleasing to Thee and that each of us may profit from it.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Well, we're turning again to Hebrews chapter 11, and tonight our Scripture is verse 32 through verse 40. This is one of those marvelous passages that one could truly and, I think, effectively give eight or ten messages on because there are incidental references to great sections of the Old Testament, which give fuller explanation of the phrases and clauses that are found here. We'll do that with one or two of them; that is, we'll show how we might be able to do that. But this is the last of our messages on Hebrews chapter 11. Verse 32, the writer writes.

“And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and of Barak and of Samson and of Jephthah, of David also and Samuel and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. 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, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

What a marvelous section from the word of God. Well, we have devoted about forty messages to the Epistle to the Hebrews 11, to this point. You probably would like to modify chapter 11 in verse 32, where the author says, “And what more shall I say” to “What more shall he say.”

I heard of a preacher a long time ago who came to this particular part of the word of God and he'd been going on for quite a long time, seemingly interminable to the audience and he shouted out, to use the words of Scripture, “And what shall I more say?” And someone in the audience, who had had enough, shouted back, “Why don't you try, ‘Amen!’” [Laughter]

I don't want to be in the position of the minister who was making an interminable call on a member of his congregation and finally the member's small daughter was moved to enquire, “Momma? Didn't the preacher bring his ‘amen’ with him?” [Laughter]

I was telling the Elders last night, I have a prayer that my little step-grandson prayed recently. Joseph Mayo, many of you have seen him running around the church he's three years old and he has two older members of the family, children, a brother and a sister and they have been leading in prayer and giving thanks at the table. And he's been making statements like he'd like to do it. And then when he's called upon, he just is too disturbed by it to say anything. So he says, he wants to give thanks but then he just looks like this and so someone else has to be asked to give thanks. But the other day, I wasn't there. Martha was there. He did finally bow his head and said this prayer. He said, “Thank you, Jesus. Amen.” And then he turned to Martha and he said, “I pray short prayers.” [Laughter] So I have a hunch we are going to enjoy other prayers of him in the future but I like that one. “I pray short prayers.”

Much more could be said than seven messages on Hebrews chapter 11, just think of the things that we have just read. I know that in the ministry that I have given over the past, for example, I've devoted at least three messages to the story of Gideon; at least four to the story of Samson, and that's a chapter at a time. It could be much more. And think of David. A few years back, we devoted a long period of time to David and his ministry and, yet, here just a word about them. So if one were to really fully expound what our author has just said in these verses, it could go on almost interminably. So we won't do

that. Much more could be said, however. What he has done is to illustrate faith. He's not exhausted it, at all. And we have not exhausted it, either.

In fact, one of the beautiful things about the word of God is that faith and the salvation in Christ is something we cannot exhaust. My mind goes back to the end of the Book of Acts, which is the story, as you know, of the early church and how they began their ministry of the Gospel that had been committed to them, and you remember that Acts chapter 28, ends rather suddenly. It ends with this verse, “Preaching the kingdom of God.” I should read verse 30, “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him.” What an unusual way to end a history, the history of the early church and its early ministry. But in a sense, it's a message in itself, because the apostle is in prison. He's in Rome. And, yet, Luke ends with, “Preaching the kingdom of God with all confidence, no man forbidding him.” How interesting that is. The Apostle Paul, well he was in prison, but, precisely, the Greek word says simply “unhindered.” In the prison, but the “word of God is unhindered.” Nero is on the throne, but the Gospel message is unhindered. In other words, the message that Luke would leave with us is the fact that while the apostles are passing off the scene, the Gospel continues because the one who brings the Gospel, ultimately, is the Lord God, and he is still living and active. And we know that down through the centuries since then, the word of God has been proclaimed and is going forth unhindered.

The great sagas through the centuries, since the writing of the Book of Acts, of course, not only the apostles but think of the men whose faith is known to us in the Christian church? An Augustine, a Luther, the Huguenots, the Puritans, the Covenanters, the Wesleys, Whitefield, Edwards, Hudson-Taylor, Adoniram Judson, C.T. Studd, and many, many others, many of whom are still living, who are carrying on in difficult place on the face of this globe, preaching the Gospel that the apostles proclaimed. So we're not

surprised that things continue because the one who is the indweller of the Church, the Holy Spirit, is very alive and very active.

The illustrations do, however, reach their culmination here in chapter 10 in verse 38, the author wrote, “Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him, but we are not of them who draw back to perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” And then in verse 39 of chapter 1, “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, receive not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

What he wants is for the history of the faith to be the urge to new faith on the part of those to whom he is writing. And, I must say, that that is really what I’m sure the Holy Spirit would love for each of us; that we be stirred by the things that we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews to new acts of faith in the name of our Lord.

It’s almost as if he would like for us as Christians, in this age, for he wrote to us in the age, to know a little bit about the history of the Christian faith. It is said that Oliver Cromwell spoke to his son Richard, when he was just a little boy, as he was turning him over to a teacher. He said, “I would like for him to learn a little history.” And this is what we do in this section that we are looking at. We go over a bit of history, that is, the history of the faith, the history that God, himself, has been responsible for, in working through the saints of Old Testament times.

But now, let’s turn to verse 32 through verse 34, where the author speaks of the triumphs of faith. “And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon.” Well, Gideon, of course, was a judge. There are five of the judges who are mentioned here. Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, Samuel; five judges, these remarkable leaders of the children of Israel. Faith preeminently manifested in the lives of these individuals.

One king, David, is mentioned. The brilliant succession of the prophets; what a collection of faithful men, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and then on top of them, the prophets.

Just take one illustration, take Gideon, the first in the list here, “Time would fail me to tell of Gideon.” You may remember that Gideon was called to minister and, ultimately, to become a judge in the time that the Midianites were fighting with the Israelites and had actually conquered them. And things were going very bad in Israel at the time, and if you remember, the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and spoke of him as a mighty warrior. Of course, he was doing nothing more than just the ordinary things that people would do, trying to make a living by farming, and he went on to say, after he was told that he would be the means of deliverance of the children of Israel, he said, “Well, I come from a very poor family and there’s no way,” essentially, he was saying, “in which I could be what you want me to be. A mighty man of valor.” But then he was told that he was the chosen one of the Lord to accomplish a great ministry. So he was called in great weakness. He was then confirmed by a theophany, in order to strengthen him for the task that he was to perform, consecrated by the work of the Holy Spirit within him, for the Holy Spirit came to act as one who endued him with power, to carry out a ministry of overthrowing Baal, and the places where Baal was worshiped, because that great principle is true that Baal must go before the Midianites go. In other words, there must be an inward transformation of the people of God before they are able to accomplish the victory that God intends to accomplish through them. So Gideon was given the strength to do that, to overthrow the places of worship. In fact, he was called “Jerub-Baal” as one who contends with Baal, as a result of it.

And so he was confirmed and consecrated for the work that was before him; the Holy Spirit came to endue him with power, and then he was used of God in that remarkable victory of three hundred individuals who destroyed an army of one hundred and thirty-five thousand. You know the story. Thirty-two thousand of the children of

Israel were gathered together, ready to do battle, and General Gideon was there, with his thirty-two thousand men and God said, there are too many people. And so he suggested to Gideon that he say to the thirty-two thousand, “Those that would like to go home, go home.” And I’m sure that Gideon was very disturbed when he saw two-thirds of his army go. Twenty-two thousand of his thirty-two thousand left. And he was left with ten thousand. God said, “There’s still too many.” I know that would have been disturbing. If it was not disturbing to Gideon, it was surely disturbing to the ten thousand who were left. That they were now too many still. And so he devised a simple little test. Go down to the brook that separated them from the Midianites and separate those who get down upon their knees and keep their eye on the enemy, and lap of the water from those that really get down and drink, as if the army is not on the other side. In other words, he was selecting out, evidently, the ones who were concerned about the ones that they faced. And three hundred, lapped of the water. And God said, “With the three hundred, we’ll win the victory.”

So he gave them a full complement of armor. [Laughter] The armor is so interesting. What he gave them was well, trumpets, and then lights, lanterns and then he told them to use their voices. Now, he said, “Gideon, if you are a bit concerned about this, tonight, go down you and your servant, go down and get near the camp of the Midianites and see what you hear.” And so he and his servant crept down near the tents of the Midianites and they heard one of the Midianties say, “I had a dream last night, and a loaf of bread rolled off the hill.” I think, it’s something like this, “A loaf of bread came and hit one of the tents of our tents and destroyed it.”

And Gideon right on the spot offered a pray to the Lord, worshipped him and prayed and said, “Thank you, Lord, for the indication of Your will.” He went back and told the men what they were to do. They were to take their lanterns, they were to put them within, I’ve forgotten exactly what it is, a container, and they were to break the

container, shout, they were to shout the Lord God and Gideon or words similar to that, I'm going by my memory. And then the lights were to be seen by all of the Midianites.

And, as you know, what happened was that when they shouted and when they broke the container in which the lights were, the lights shown, and the Midianites awakened, they were surrounded by the three hundred men. And the Midianites got out their swords and began to slay each other, which they did. And the result was that three hundred men, Gideon and his three hundred, overcame the one hundred and thirty-five thousand of the Midianites. And if my memory serves me, one hundred and twenty thousand of them were slain. What a magnificent victory of faith. So the author says, “Time would fail me to tell of Gideon.” Of Barak, another instance of faith, not so outstanding as Gideon but, nevertheless, another instance of faith. Of Samson, well we all know about Samson. If Gideon's victory was a military marvel, Samson's was quite a bit different. Samson was one of those unusual individuals who had remarkable abilities but who had personal problems and, finally, as you know, after carrying on a ministry of destruction of the Philistines, he finally was lured by Delilah into his lap, and revealed the fact that the secret of his strength was the fact that he had been a Nazorite from his birth. And you remember that she finally persuaded him to tell her the real secret of his strength. She did it, I presume, just like most women would like to do. She reached the place where she said, “How can you say ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me?” I can just heard the plaintive tones of her voice. “How can you say, Samsy, that you really love me?” [Laughter] “Your heart is not with me. You've mocked me these three times. You've not told me wherein your great strength lieth.” And then because after all it says, “She pressed him daily with her words and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death.”

I'm thankful I have a wife who has never vexed me. [Laughter] Why are you men laughing? Anyway, I have a wife who has never vexed me. But he was vexed unto death. And then he told all of his heart, and said to her, “There hath not come a razor

upon mine head, for I have been a Nazorite unto God, from my mother’s womb.” And you know the story that she did, as she had done before, she called out, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson.” He awoke out of his sleep and said, “I will go out as other times and shake myself, but very, very significantly, “He wist not, he knew not that the Lord had departed from him.”

Bingle, the commentator of some centuries later, said, “Whoever has God, knows it. Whomsoever he has left, knows it not.” And poor Samson did not realize that God had departed from him. The result was that the Philistines came, took him captive, destroyed his eyes, made him a laughing stock among the Philistines until, you know, the world always forgets the important things about spiritual truth. So after a lengthy period of time, the Philistines had a festival, so they thought they would make fun of Samson, because he had been their great tormentor. So they all gathered at the temple, which had two central posts within it, upon which everything held. And there were thousands there. And they were making fun of Samson, but they had forgotten one significant thing. They had forgotten to have his hair cut. They hadn’t taken him to the barber. Why, you know, as you look at it now that would have been the first thing you would do. You would take Samson, you would destroy his eyes, if you wish and if you wanted to keep him weak, you would have his own personal barber with him all the time, cutting his hair every day, just to be sure.

But the world does not understand truth. And so his hair had grown, his strength had come, he spoke to the person by his side, who was his helper, “Put my hands on the columns of the temple.” And you remember, he prayed a very, very brief prayer. It’s one of the great prayers of the Bible, in my opinion. He said, “Lord, O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee. And strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.” And he took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, on which it was borne up, and he pulled and the whole house came down. So the author says, “The dead which he slew at his death were

more than they which he slew in his life.” A magnificent way to finish one’s life of faith, and you cannot help but admire Samson, in spite of his many failures, he was a man of God, mentioned in the New Testament. David, of course, we could talk for weeks about David. Samuel and the prophets.

Now, in verse 33, their works are specifically set out. And 34, “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire.” You can recognize these clauses are references to passages in the Old Testament. For example, take the one, “quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword,” and so on. “Quenched the violence of fire,” you think of the three Hebrews and the fiery furnace. You know the story of how they were finally thrown in the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar wanted worship, but he didn’t get it from them. And so as a result, he threw them into the fiery furnace and then was startled to discover that he had thrown three into the fiery furnace, but a fourth was there, who was like unto the Son of God. And those three Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, someone has said, one of the evangelists, or Hart, Schaffner, and Marx, those three were delivered in a remarkable way and their story, too, is here, in just a phrase of the word of God. “Quenched the violence of fire.” And Nebuchadnezzar was so startled by it that he recognized that their God was the true God.

It is said, also, “stopped the mouths of lions.” That’s a marvelous story of Daniel, of course. Daniel, you may remember in the reign of Darius, the Persian, because he was one of the top rulers in the land, one of the three top rulers, there was a lot of jealousy of Daniel. And so the result was that several of the others decided to frame him. And they realized that the only way they could frame him, they couldn’t frame him on any charge of wickedness in any way, except with reference to his God. And so they conceived the idea of having Darius pass a decree that one could for thirty days pray only with reference to Darius and the gods of the Persians, knowing, of course, that Daniel prayed three times a day. It was well known. He opened his doors and windows. One could

see him in the morning, at noon, and at night, praying. And so they had the decree passed and Darius was forced to do it, not thinking of what might result. And then when they passed it, they got outside of Daniel's place and looked in order to see him pray.

And they got out there early. I can just imagine they were out there before the sun was up because he prayed early. And they waited around and the sun was coming up and they said to one another, “The old man has not come out yet.” So the old man does have a weakness. He's not going to pray now for thirty days. But then, of course, the doors opened and the windows opened, and there is Daniel praying. And the result is, of course, that Daniel is brought before Darius, who doesn't like what has happened.

But, nevertheless, the laws of the Medes and Persians, they must be carried out. And so Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. The one who was the faithful servant of the Lord is thrown into the den of the lions. And Darius could hardly wait to come there the next day to find out what had happened. And so he came and asked has God been able to deliver him. Daniel comes out. And as a result of that, Daniel is made the head of those who are underneath King Darius.

You know, there's a marvelous little text in the Psalms that, I think, fits Daniel very well. And this particular instance. In Psalm 25, verse 14, I know, that you know this text, but it's, “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.” “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.” I think that's so interesting, that text, and who ever applied this text or called up this text, with Daniel, chapter 6, where the Lion's Den chapter is, did it by an act of inspiration from the Holy Spirit because if you will remember, outside of chapter 2, previously, where Daniel is given the great vision, of Gentile world power, it's in chapter 7, right after chapter 6, that we have 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 great chapters, in which many, many details regarding the future are set forth.

In other words, “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant,” and Daniel, by virtue of the great faithfulness which he

exhibited, I don't mean that he worked in order to obtain this insight, he was a man of faith. But God rewarded his faith by giving him these marvelous pictures that moved from Daniel's day, all the way down to the Second Advent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And when we study the prophetic word today, what are the two great books that we study? The Book of Daniel in the Old Testament, and especially chapters 7 through 14 of that book, and the Book of Revelation. So Daniel's name surely belongs here. He's referred to with “quenched the violence of fire, stopped the mouths of lions.”

Now, at verse 35, the author begins to talk about the trials of faith, after having talked about the triumphs of faith. Because, after all, not everybody has the experience of a Gideon. Not everybody has the experience of a Barak or especially of a Daniel.

Now, in verse 35, notice the things that he singles out as being significant. And, by the way, some of these things are not found in the Old Testament. We'll talk about one or two of them as we go through.

“Women received their dead raised to life again.” We know the reference to that and I'll mention it just, in a moment, but not all of the faithful have worldly success. I think that's so important for us to realize. We live in the twentieth century and we intend to think highly of worldly success. But the faithful often are those who suffer; and these individuals are those who suffer. They suffer and suffer terribly. They lose their lives.

It's faith, triumphant through agony. And many of the saints down through the years have had to experience that. I have not had to experience that. But many of the saints have had to experience it and many in the twentieth century even, have had to experience it. Russell Lowell, who wrote those famous stanzas, is certainly right, “Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own.”

We certainly see that here, in these verses. “Women received their dead raised to life again.” Well, Elijah knew the experience of being the instrumentality of raising a widow’s son to life. And Elisha also. Think of the Shunammite woman. The Shunammite woman with whom Elisha stayed in his prophecy in his prophetic ministry. In fact, he was provided with a room built by the Shunammite and her husband, for him, for he passed by so frequently and was with them. And it touched Elisha so much that he felt that he should offer her a small reward for what she had done for the ministry of the word, through him, the prophetic word, and so, she was a woman who was barren. And he gave her the promise of a child. And she asked him, as I remember, “Don’t make fun of me.” But, nevertheless, she became pregnant. She had a child and then, later on, when the child was still a relatively small child, the child went out into the field where his father was working, and if you’ll remember, was struck with sunstroke. Was brought into the house and died.

The Shunammite woman immediately sent for Elisha. And when Elisha saw her servant coming, he recognized that something was wrong. And he was called, I think, I’ve mixed those two stories up because the woman came to Elisha and Elisha’s servant met her and asked her, “Is everything all right?” Or, “Is everything well?” She said, “All is well.” Her child is dead but, “All is well.” What a magnificent exhibition of faith.

At any rate, the result was, as you know, that Elisha came back, went upstairs, gave instructions to his servant to go back with her, take the child, but the child upstairs on the bed, which he ordinarily slept in, and then when he arrived, he went upstairs, put his face on the child’s face, his mouth on the child’s mouth, and as a result of that, the skin, the body became warm. He took the child down, gave him back to his mother. “Women received their dead.” What’s interesting about that is that all things were well, so far as she was concerned, even if there was no salvation for and resurrection for her child.

There’s a marvelous little story that Dr. Barnhouse contends and gives in one of his books as a true story that happened to him. He was holding some meetings in the

home of a young minister and these were weekly meetings. Every week, he would go and preach the word of God. And this young man was expecting a young child soon. And he said, about three weeks later, he came to the service, just before its close. The man had told Dr. Barnhouse, I should have said this, “I may not be able to attend every meeting because we’re expecting a baby soon.” And about three weeks later, he came to the service, just before its close. And Dr. Barnhouse said, “After I went into the study where he was, and he had his back turned to me. And I went up to him and I said,” Dr. Barnhouse said, “Well, what is it? Or which is it? A boy or a girl?” And he said, the young man turned, and I saw his tragedy written on his face. He said, “God has given me a son and I love that boy. But he is a Mongoloid idiot.” And Dr. Barnhouse said, “At the very outset, you must learn that God almighty has honored you more than he has honored many people. God does not give the privilege of great suffering to every one of his children. He has chosen you for this purpose.” He said, “I then turned to the 4th chapter of the Book of Exodus, in which God talks to Moses at the burning bush. And I pointed to verse 11.”

Moses had just said, you remember, complaining when God had called him to minister the word. Moses is complaining, “I’m slow of speech and have a slow tongue.” And God had replied, “Who hath made man’s mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or the deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?” “But I read the verse this way,” Dr. Barnhouse said to the young man, “And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Who hath made man’s mouth? Or who maketh him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind, or a Mongoloid Idiot? Have not I the Lord?’” He said, the young man snatched the Bible from him and read it for himself. “Oh,” he said, “I never saw that before. But it’s true. It’s true! It must be true. And I do believe it!”

You cannot help but feel that the faith that God gives the Christians often, today, is the same kind of faith that these individuals had in the Old Testament, and while we

don't read of anyone here having children such as that young man had, they, too, suffered.

“Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.” Not simply a resurrection but a resurrection unto life. “Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder.”

That's an interesting statement because that is not found in the Old Testament. This is a reference to the tradition concerning the death of Isaiah. The tradition is that Isaiah died by being “sawn asunder” by a sword, slicing him in two parts. And this, evidently, as tradition the author accepted, “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.”

The chapter begins with the statement, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith sees the invisible. Faith hears the inaudible. Faith touches the intangible. These are the things that are important in the experiences of life, for all of us. We, in faith, see the invisible world that lies beyond us. And in the experiences of life, what can be stronger help when we are passing through trials than to realize just this that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Those things are truly substantial. They are things that are truly there. And through faith we see them and in experience we shall know them.

So faith sees the invisible things of the future, hears the inaudible, touches the intangible. These are the things that apply to the experience of cancer, they apply to the experience of business reverses, they apply to all of the other experiences that all of us have at one time or another. And if we live long enough, we all, every one in this room, if our Lord does not come, you'll know precisely something of the meaning of this in your own personal experience. “Sawn asunder.” “Of whom the world was not worthy.” I

never cease to be thrilled by this clause. “Of whom the world was not worthy.” Their opposition, the world with its lack of assurance and conviction is a defeated foe. Let us never forget that. We are dealing with a defeated foe.

The world, the Lord Jesus said, has been overcome by him. And so, those whose faith is settled in our Lord Jesus Christ are overcomers, by virtue of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of the experiences of life, as deep, as difficult, as hard as they may come, are steps along the way to the glorious, eternal future that lies ahead, for all of us. We know that to be true. We know that by faith. We know that by the word of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when we look at the Cross of Calvary, we know that that is the foundation of it. That work has won it all for us. The last two verses, well, I should read, I guess 36 through 38.

“And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. They wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

And the only thing our author seems to leave out, which is characteristic of Christians is, they were burned at the stake. But he wasn't living at the time at which he could have written that.

When you think of Thomas Cranmer. Thomas Cranmer was a great man of God who recanted what he said he believed and then he recanted his recantation. And then in a magnificent act of faith as he was burned at the stake took his hand and put his hand first in the fire and put it first in the fire because that's the hand with which he signed the document by which he recanted his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he wanted that to

burn first. And so we know of Thomas Cranmer, as one of the great heroes of more modern Christianity.

There are so many of them who were burned at the stake, for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Read the Covenanters' history, in Scotland. Many, many of them burned at the stake. You can stand in Saint Andrews and stand at the place, marked in the ground, by little disks, like this, of where individuals were burned at the stake for the faith that you and I say we believe.

So we're not talking about things that happened back in Old Testament times only. We're talking about things relatively recently in the land of Scotland and England, and things that are happening on the face of this globe in different at this very moment.

Now, verse 40 and verse 41 or 39 and 40, have to do with faith's termination, the perfection that lies ahead for us. “And all these, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” So that things are moving on to God's future, which is bigger than the Old Testament saints every imagined. And we know, now, after nineteen hundred years that it gets bigger as the centuries go by.

I have in notes a story that, I think, illustrates some of the things that we Christians are sometimes called upon to suffer. But, also, things that God brings to us that magnifies his grace, showing us what he can do in the midst of our trials. There was a young woman in Britain, who in her earlier years consecrated her life for mission work in India. She was ready for the great enterprise, but just before she was ready to set sail for India, her mother was taken sick with a lingering disease. She had to stay and nurse her for some three years. Then the release came and her mother went home and she made preparations the second time to set out for India.

She had a widowed sister, who lived in the west of the island, and she received a call from her widowed sister that her widowed sister was sick, and there were three little children that needed caring. And so she laid aside her plans, went to her sister's house,

in order to care for her. And, of course, what happened was that in a short time, her sister died and she was left with three little children.

All the plans for going to India, which she thought were from the Lord God, were cancelled, so far as she knew, and she remained with the three children, devoted herself to them, and finally all of the three children were able to look after themselves. But, by that time she was too old to go to the mission field. Then one day, one of those orphans for whom she had given up her life's dream, put her arms around her neck, and told her that she was going to be a missionary, and that the field that she had chosen was India.

This was a sermon that Mr. Sangster told gave, in Britain in London and he goes on to say, “And in later days, the other two told the same story.” So they all three went away to India, which she had so longed to go. And as they passed out to the land of her love and her prayers, this heroic soul knew that she had not failed. And so, God's call, to Elijah, to you and to me, is to leave off our heartbreaking bookkeeping, to put our hands in his and to resume the journey. What a story of the sovereign determination of the Lord God, which is so often different from what we have imagined for ourselves.

Well, let me conclude. As we look over this great Westminster Abby of Scripture, we notice this; circumstances of life may vary. There is an Abel. There is a Noah. There is an Enoch. There is an Abraham. Not all preachers, although Noah was a preacher. Enoch preached. Abraham seemed to. I don't know how much Abel did. They are all different positions that we have within the Body of Christ; but the abiding principle of God does not. Faith, seeing him who is invisible in all of our circumstances leads to life. This is something for fathers to learn. It's something for families to learn. It's something for businessmen to learn. It's something for church people to realize. A church like this, to realize, that the God of the Church is still alive, still working in our midst, and we may expect him as we look to him to do great things through us as a local church as we look to him, and call upon him, and rely upon his faithfulness to his word, as it is proclaimed and as it, in my opinion, proclaimed here at this present time. So fathers and families,

and businessmen and church, and all of the others, the young men, the older men, those who put their hands in the Lord’s hand, can be sure that the future is bright. Faith brings the approval of God and accomplishes his work in the personal life also. Peace of mind, joy, in church life, fruitfulness, usefulness.

The Lord Jesus said two things that I’d like to just close with. In Mark chapter 11, he told the apostles-to-be, “Have faith in God.” Simple little words, aren’t they? Mark 11:22. “Have faith in God.”

When my first child was born, I was told by Dr. Barnhouse, “Now, you must start teaching him the word of God while he’s still in the crib.” And I didn’t know anything other than to just do exactly what Dr. Barnhouse said. I said, “How can you do that? He cannot even talk.” He said, “Recite Bible verses in the crib, when you put them to bed, and that will stay with them.” And so I would take Sam and put him in the crib and say, “Mark chapter 11, verse 22. ‘Have faith in God.’” I had another text, I’ve forgotten which one that I used then. Two texts. The poor child had that every night. I guess he thought that’s the way you go to sleep. Mark 11:22, that’s supposed to put you to sleep. “Have faith in God.”

Well, I thank God he’s a Christian man at the present moment. And, it may be, I don’t know that it’s necessarily traceable to that, but Dr. Barnhouse said it would be. And, as far as I was concerned, I did it. So I can still remember leaning over the crib and saying, as we were ready to turn out the lights, Mark 11:22, “Have faith in God.”

What was interesting, later on, walk though the house, and I would hear him, he couldn’t walk yet, but could say a few things, well, at least, he couldn’t walk very well. He’d be sitting, over in the corner of a room, playing and he would say, “Mark 11:22, Have faith in God.” [Laughter] Didn’t know what it meant but the word was there.

I had forgotten. That’s the exact verse, but it was one just exactly like that. It’s one of those short verses, like Joseph’s prayer, “Have faith in God.”

The other text is, “According to your faith, so be it unto you.”

Last night, I was reading in Matthew, I know you wanted to know where I was on my third time through the Bible this year. I'm in Mark, I'm in Matthew, and I'm past chapter 9. But last night, in chapter 9 in verse 29, I read these words, “Then touched he their eyes, saying ‘According to your faith be it unto you.’”

What a marvelous, what a marvelous thing it is to know that as we believe the word of God, we can count upon God making that word real in our lives. Bring all of our problems to him! All of our trials to him! All of our difficulties to him! Commit them to the Lord, and then rest in his word. The fulfillment of them may not be like we expect it to be. Like that woman who prayed that she might have a ministry to India, thinking that she would be the minister and discovered it was three of her nieces who went.

But, still, we know God answers those prayers. If by chance you are in this auditorium this evening and you do not know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I think, as I look around here most of you I recognize as being believing people, the Gospel message concerning the Lord Jesus Christ is the way to life. Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him [has faith in him] shall not perish, but have eternal life.” The apostle said to the Philippians jailer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved.”

What is it to believe? I received a letter this week from a young man who's listening to our tapes and he said, “I want you, I understand that salvation is through faith, but please tell me what faith is?” And so I had the joy of writing him a letter this week and telling him what faith is. Explained to him that faith is made up of knowledge, assent, trust. Those are the things that make up faith. When a person truly believes, he's been brought the knowledge of what Christ has done, he has by the work of the Holy Spirit been brought to assent to the message, and, further, the Holy Spirit has brought him to rest in our Lord and the message concerning him for a time and for eternity.

So we invite you to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, that you might be saved also.

Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for these marvelous words from the author of this epistle, as we think of all that lies behind all these little phrases and clauses, whole lives, whole ages, whole families, we realize how big is the work that Thou hast been doing down through the years. That should not surprise us, Lord. Thou art an infinite God and, therefore, all of Thy ways reflect the infiniteness of Thy nature. And we thank Thee for the infiniteness of the loving kindness and mercy shown to us. And we pray, O God, that through us this message may go forth. And through this church, this message may continue to go forth, in the power of our Triune God.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.