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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

Analysis of Hebrews: Chapter 11 & 12



Part 20/23

God's Last Word: An Exposition of Hebrews By Derek Prince

We're in Hebrews 11:28. This is still part of the record of the accomplishments of Moses by faith. We stopped last time because we ran out of time in the middle of the record of what Moses accomplished by faith. So now we come to verse 28:

> "By faith he observed the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, in order that the destroyer might not touch their firstborn."

That, of course, refers to the Passover ceremony in the history of Israel. I've given you the reference there, I don't think we'll turn there tonight, but the reference is Exodus 12:21–30. I'm sure most of you are familiar with the story. God was about to bring judgment on the Egyptians because Pharaoh had persistently hardened his heart and refused to obey the Lord's command to release the Israelites, and the judgment would be that the destroying angel would pass through the land at midnight and slay the firstborn in every home and among all the beasts. Every firstborn, whether man or animal, was to be slain at midnight. But, in order that the Israelites might be preserved from this judgment of God, the Lord ordained the ceremony of the Passover. Every Israelite father had to find a lamb without blemish, slay him at the appointed hour on the appointed day, catch the blood in a basin or a receptacle of some kind, and then he had to sprinkle the blood on his home on the outside on the lintel and the two sideposts of the door. The blood was never to be sprinkled on the floor because it was sacred; no one was ever to walk over the blood.

Then the second part of the ceremony, which is not really referred to in this, was that the Israelites that evening were to feed on the flesh of the lamb, eating it with bitter herbs, with their loins girded and staves in their hands because they were about to start on that long journey which ultimately would take them to the Promised Land. Of course, this ceremony, in a different way, has been observed and is still observed by the Jewish people up to this time, which is well over three thousand years. Let's consider the significance of what Moses was asked to do. Like, I would say, all the sacrificial animals recorded in the Old Testament—but in a very special way—the lamb was a prefiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ: the Lamb of God.

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And when Jesus appeared on the banks of the Jordan to begin His ministry, you'll remember that His forerunner, John the Baptist, said of Him, "Behold, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." And every Israelite would instantly begin to think in terms of such ceremonies as the Passover when he heard that phrase "the Lamb of God." What John the Baptist was saying, "This lamb, Jesus, will not merely provide redemption for the Jewish people but He'll provide redemption for the world."

I'm always impressed by the fact that there was only one way that the blood was to be applied. If you look there, each father had to take a little bunch of hyssop—a plant that grows very commonly in the Middle East—and dip it in the blood and apply it on the outside of his house. I've continually made this point, which I believe is relevant for Christians: The blood in the basin protected no one. It had to be transferred from the basin to the house, and only there did it provide protection. There was only one permitted way to transfer the blood from the basin to the house. And, that was with this little bunch of hyssop. Hyssop is a very cheap, common herb. There's no difficulty about obtaining it.

I believe that the blood of Jesus shed on the cross provides total redemption for all who believe in Him. But the fact that the blood was shed protects no one. The blood has to be transferred from the basin in the parable to the place where we're at, the place where we need protection. As I understand it, the only way that we can transfer the blood of Jesus so that it covers and protects our lives is by the confession of our mouth.

In Revelation 12:11 it says of the victorious saints:

> "They overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony ..."

In other words, they overcame Satan when they testified personally to what the Word of God says the blood of Jesus does for us. This brings out, I think, in such a vivid way the absolute vital importance of confession, of making the right testimony, of saying the right thing with our mouths. We may believe in Jesus, we may believe in His blood, but we are not protected until we make the confession that applies the blood to our lives.

In my outline there you'll see that we reiterate two of the principles already stated. Principle number 7 is that faith must be confessed. Principle number 9 is that God honors confession of our faith. In this case, confession of faith came through publicly displaying the blood of the lamb on the outside of the house, ready to be seen by God and by the destroying angel.

I might mention something else which always occurs to me in connection with this incident. In 1979 Ruth and I spent the summer in Jerusalem studying at the Hebrew University studying Hebrew. In Israel you get news from the rest of the world somewhat sporadically if it doesn't concern Israel. If they have time on the news they'll give you a little news about somewhere else. If they don't then the rest of the world is ignored. One day we got the news over the radio that there was a hurricane approaching Florida from the southeast. Those of you that lived here will remember that. I think it was probably about July of 1979. There was a very vivid description of people battening down their windows in Miami and people filling their baths with an extra supply of water. Then some crisis flared up in the Middle East and we never could find out what happened next—which, of course, was somewhat rather tantalizing.

Well, about three or four days later I got hold of a Hebrew newspaper and read that—Incidentally, Ruth and I prayed a prayer of authority. We were talking about being able to make decrees with divine authority. We were praying together and we prayed that the hurricane might change its course, that God would divert the hurricane. We didn't hear any more until I got this newspaper which said that precisely what we prayed had happened. Contrary to all the forecasts, the hurricane had been diverted and had passed by and left nothing more than some very heavy rainfall in the area where we lived.

We actually read this news item in the class to practice our Hebrew. The Hebrew word for Passover is ?pesach? and the verb from it is ?pasach?. In this account in the newspaper they actually used that word. They said the hurricane ?pasach?, "passed over," Florida. And the Jewish students in the class didn't know what it meant. I said to them, "Well, of all people, you ought to know what that word means. It's the same as ?pesach?, and it means that instead of judgment coming upon you, it passes you by." That's always made it so vivid to me that that was the purpose of the blood, was to cause the judgment of God to be diverted from the homes of the Israelites and to pass by.

Now we'll go on to the next verse which is just one verse, verse 29, the final faith accomplishment of Moses and the children of Israel together. I think it's significant that, in a certain sense, Moses brought the children of Israel out of the place where they shared his faith. I think initially he operated out of his own faith but by the time he'd been ministering and dealing with Pharaoh and the Egyptians he brought his people to the place where they could share his

faith. So, in the next verse, verse 29, it doesn't speak only about what Moses did but about what the children of Israel did. It actually says "they" but we understand that's the Israelites.

> "By faith they crossed through the Red Sea as on dry land; which the Egyptians, attempting to do were drowned."

What was the accomplishment here? Crossing the Red Sea as on dry ground. If you want to know where the account is found, it's in Exodus 14:21–29. Incidentally, if you have a New American Standard with the full margins, all these references are given there. That was the act of faith, was passing through the Red Sea.

It was initiated when Moses stretched out his rod. I believe I've emphasized in previous sessions faith always has to be expressed in some act. It may be an extremely simple act, but faith without works is dead. The simple act of Moses in this case was simply stretching out his rod over the Red Sea. When he did that, God sent the wind that parted the waters.

We've looked at the result in each case. What was accomplished by this particular example of faith? In this case, the result was final separation from Egypt. I think it's important to see that the Israelites were saved in Egypt through the blood but they were separated from Egypt through the water.

Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 10 that this has a very clear application to us as Christians. I would like to turn for a moment to 1 Corinthians 10. Keep your finger in Hebrews 11, we'll be back there. Just the first two verses of 1 Corinthians 10:

> "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren..."

And I pointed out, I think, more than once that when Paul says "I do not want you to be ignorant or unaware," in most cases contemporary Christians are ignorant of whatever it is that he didn't want them to be ignorant of. So the situation hasn't changed much in nineteen centuries!

> "I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea..."

The "sea" is the Red Sea, the cloud was that mysterious cloud that came down over them as they approached the waters of the Red Sea and then led them for the next forty years through the wilderness. The cloud is a very vivid picture of the Holy Spirit. In the next verse Paul says:

> "...and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea..."

So both the cloud and the sea represent baptism. And Paul goes on to say in this chapter they are all patterns that we should follow.

Let's ask ourselves for a moment: What is typified by these two baptisms? Notice it says they were baptized into or unto Moses. They were set apart as a people who followed Moses by this double baptism. Remember that the word baptize basically always means "to immerse." So, when they came to the waters of the Red Sea, they experienced a double immersion. The order given here is in the cloud and in the sea, which I understand to represent baptism in the Holy Spirit and baptism in water. The cloud came down over them and every Israelite passed through the cloud. They were immersed in the cloud coming down over them from above. And almost every place in the book of Acts where it speaks about people being baptized in the Holy Spirit, the text actually states that it came down upon them. This is a vivid picture.

But then they went down into the sea, passed through the sea and came up on the other side. That is a very clear picture of baptism in water. They went down on one side and came up on the other side. They went down as fugitives, they came up as victors. When they came up, they were a new people with a new leader, new laws and a new destination. What a vivid picture of what water baptism ought to be. You go down out of one world but you come up into a new world. In Christ you've passed through death and into resurrection into newness of life.

What I want to emphasize, returning to Hebrews 11, is that it was not the blood that separated them from Egypt. The blood saved them in Egypt, but it was the water that finally separated them from Egypt. It was the water that the Egyptians could not pass through. I personally believe that brings out a tremendously important aspect of baptism in water. It is the final act of separation from the old life and the old world.

I've counseled with many, many people who have problems from the old life following them up. I always check with them, "Have you ever been buried and resurrected?" If not, you really don't have the legal right to be free from those

problems because that's God's appointed way of separation.

In my case, I can look back to 1942. I had been a Christian just over one year. I'd spent most of that year in the deserts of North Africa where there was no water to be baptized. In any case, there was no one to baptize. Then I went on military leave to Jerusalem and I stumbled into the arms of a Pentecostal missionary and his family. They mercilessly began to talk to me about being baptized in water. I was still trying to adjust to all that God had already done in my life and I wasn't sure I was ready for anything more. They said, "We'll take you down to the Jordan and we'll baptize you there." To many people, apparently, that is very romantic. But to me it wasn't. I just didn't like the idea. However, I'm a logical person and as I looked at the Scriptures I saw it's obviously there, there's no way of getting around it. I said, "All right, I'll do it." I still have two pictures of that ceremony. Those of you that have been to Israel know Jordan is not in the least bit a romantic stream. It's very muddy, particularly the bottom of it is about six inches deep in mud. It's very difficult to stand up on it. And for some reason which I'm sure was very appropriate, they didn't have a white baptismal robe for me, they had a black one. They were emphasizing resurrection, they were emphasizing death. So I went in and the first picture shows the pastor and me standing side by side in the water. The next picture just shows the pastor and a splash where I was! I have full photographic evidence that I was truly buried.

Well, what I want to relate is that I'd had a marvelous experience with salvation. My whole life, personality, had been totally and radically transformed. I had been saved from sin. But, I still had in my mind many memories of the old sinful ways. I wasn't imprisoned by them, but I wasn't totally free from them. I didn't have any theories about what water baptism ought to do except I knew I had to do it. After a little while I realized that when I went down into the water, those memories were buried. When I came up, I was free from them.

You see, if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin but the spirit is life because of righteousness. That's the new birth. But it is a scandal to leave a dead body lying around unburied. If you study the New Testament you'll find that they invariably buried people by baptism immediately. There never was delay. On the Day of Pentecost, three thousand were baptized in one day. When Philip met the eunuch on the road to Gaza, they didn't even complete the journey. The eunuch said, "There's water beside the road; let me be baptized." I think most dramatically of all, in Philippi when the earthquake liberated the prisoners and the jailer came in and got saved, the Scripture says he and all his household were baptized that very night. They didn't even wait for dawn.

I believe there's a kind of urgency about being baptized which we've lost, most of us. Put your name down and when we have a baptismal service we'll baptize you. That's not New Testament. Or, if I feel like it. I have to tell you Jesus said very clearly, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." He did not say anything about the one who believes but isn't baptized. I'm not saying such a person is not saved but I'm saying they're trespassing on the grace of God.

Let's look at our outline again. The result: final separation from Egypt—a type of water baptism. P.14, principle number 14: that which is begun in faith must be completed in faith. I think that's tremendously important. They were saved through faith in the blood but they couldn't then find some other means to complete their salvation. They had to go on in faith. I've seen many people get into difficulties by beginning in faith and then going back to their natural ability and natural thinking. I think that was the problem of the Galatians. "Are you so foolish? Did you begin in the Spirit and are you now seeking to be made perfect by the flesh?" I think that's an important lesson for us today. The only way to complete what we began in faith is by going on in faith. I quote there the last two verses of Hebrews 10 where it gives us just two alternatives: either to go on in faith to salvation or to turn back to perdition. It's a very solemn alternative.

Going on to verse 30, which again speaks of an accomplishment of the Israelites after they'd entered the Promised Land and under their new leader Joshua. It's a very short verse.

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

You remember the strategy for taking Jericho was that the entire male Israelite population was to march around the city once a day for six days, but on the seventh day, seven times. Which makes how many times altogether? Thirteen. At the end of the thirteenth time when the priest blew the ram's horn, all the people were to give a shout. But prior to giving a shout they were to say nothing. That was a real test of discipline, especially if you know Jewish people, because the hardest thing for them is not to say anything! I don't know whether you've ever traveled on El Al Airlines but they'll stand in the aisles of the plane all night talking to somebody rather than just sitting quiet. So, Joshua really

had something that he could keep them all silent for seven trips 'round Jericho.

Then they gave this shout and the walls of Jericho fell down. Again, I give the reference in Joshua 6:15–21. This is example 15, the result: total victory for Israel without a single casualty. The principles I bring out are a reiteration of principles 7 and 9 which you should be getting to know by know. Principle 7: faith has to be confessed. Principle 9: God honors faith's confession. Their confession was their shout. The shout wasn't so loud that it brought the walls down, but it brought God on the scene. He honored the confession which was represented by their shout. Now we go on to verse 31 and this to me is the most outstanding example of faith, in a way, in all this list. Maybe not so much of faith as of grace. Grace is defined usually as God's free, unmerited favor toward the undeserving and the ill deserving. We deserve punishment but instead we get blessing. But it's only by grace and the essential principle of grace is it can never be earned. The moment you earn something it's not grace. That's the problem with many, many religious people. They feel they've got to earn it and so they never really receive it because it cannot be received by earning. There are many things we can earn from God but not grace.

So, let's look at this example.

> "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient [or unbelieving —the word can mean either], having received the spies with peace."

I give the reference but time, I think, indicates we shouldn't try to read it. Joshua 2:1–21 and 6:22–25. You remember that Joshua sent two spies ahead of the Israelite army to spy out the land and they came in the city of Jericho and they took refuge or they found shelter in the house of Rahab the harlot. I'm not really an expert in these old customs, but apparently the lady that kept an inn was always referred to as the harlot. In other words, that particular profession combined with the other one. And so, they were not necessarily going into a brothel, they were just going into the inn. But, it was kept by Rahab, which gives a kind of picture of the morality of the times.

Then the king of Jericho heard the spies had come in and sent to Rahab to have them brought out so they might be killed. But Rahab had hidden them on her roof under the stalks of flax which were being put out to dry before they were turned into whatever flax is turned into. Rahab lied, I have to say. Really, I'm not capable of judging the morality of this or the ethics. She told a flat lie. What would you do if you were in Nazi Germany during World War II sheltering some Jews in your attic and a storm trooper came in and said, "Do you have any Jews in this house?" Before you criticize Rahab, you better face that question. I've always trusted God that in His mercy He'd never put me in that position because honestly, I wouldn't know what to do. I think I'd do what Rahab did. You can form your estimate of me that way. I think I would never forgive myself if I betrayed the innocent to their brutal murderers.

But, you see, there are a lot of situations in life you better be praying when you get into them. Not everything is an easy decision. Some religious people make everything just black and white but it really isn't exactly that way. Anyhow, she lied. She said, "They were here; they've gone. Hurry after them and you'll catch them." She got them off her back and then later that night she went up and talked to them and said a remarkable thing. I think maybe we should just read that. You'll find it in Joshua 2. You know one of the things that impresses me is you meet people in all sorts of walks of life who have the most remarkable discernment. They're not churchgoers, you wouldn't think they were spiritual but they come out and say something that really penetrates to the heart of the matter. And Rahab was in that category. We'll look at Joshua 2:8 and following.

Now before they lay down [that's these two spies], she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea ..."

She had no doubt, see? How did she know? By faith. It's by faith which brought discernment. Then she said let's make a deal. Verse 12:

> "Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth..."

One thing that impresses me about Rahab is she had a big heart. She didn't want to just save her own life, she wanted to save her whole household. I think some non-churchgoers and non-religious people are much more merciful than some churchgoers. I always think of the words of David when he was given a choice and he said, "Let me fall into the hands of the LORD, for very great are His mercies." That's my attitude. If I've got to fall into anybody's hands, let it be the Lord's and not the church's.

All right. I've heard Bob Mumford say once, "Joe the bartender has a lot more compassion than many churchgoers." Really. That's why he's a good bartender because he listens to everybody's tales of woe. You know people are longing to find somebody that will just listen.

Verse 13:

> "'...spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our souls from death.' So the men said to her, 'Our life [or our soul] for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the LORD gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.' Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall [I want you to note that], so that she was living on the wall. And she said to them, Go to the hill country' [verse 17:] And the men said to her, 'We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father, your mother and your brothers and all your father's household. And it shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if a hand is laid on him.'"

It's somewhat similar, in a way, to the Passover ceremony, isn't it? In the Passover ceremony they had to put the blood on the outside of the house and then they had to stay inside the house. No protection was offered to anybody who didn't stay behind the blood. And here another symbol, the scarlet thread, was to be hung in the window but only the people in the house behind that window were protected. Anybody who went out of the house lost their guarantee of protection.

Now, let me ask you a question. For whose benefit was the scarlet thread hung in the window? Who was to see it? Well, if you read the story, it didn't make any difference to what happened as far as the Israelites were concerned. It must have been for the Lord's benefit. It was her confession typifying the confession of faith in the blood of the lamb.

We have friends in Israel who have a little daughter whose name is ?Shami?, which is the Hebrew word for "scarlet." She represents the scarlet thread that runs all through the Bible.

Now let's look at what happened because this is really very vivid. We'll come to Joshua 6:20.

> "So the people shouted, and [the] priests blew the trumpets, and it came about, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, that the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city."

Some people believe the wall fell right down into the ground, it just went straight down like an elevator into the basement. Where was Rahab's house? On the wall. But her house didn't fall down. Who protected it? Not man, but God. Why did He protect it? Because of the scarlet thread in the window.

Look at verses 22 and 23.

> "And Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, 'Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her.' So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had..."

She had a big heart, she had a lot of faith.

> "...they also brought out all her relatives, and placed them outside the camp. [verse 25] However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this

> day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent [out] to spy out Jericho."

That was not the end of Rahab's story. She had a destiny. Turn to the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew

1. To me, this is one of the most remarkable things in the Bible really. And in the whole genealogy of Jesus, the wives and mothers are not mentioned except for two people, each of whom was not an Israelite. The first was Rahab, the second was Ruth. Look in verses 5 and 6.

> "...and to Salmon was born Boaz by Rahab..."

So she married Salmon, who was a prince of Israel, and in the direct line of the ancestry of Jesus.

> "...and to Boaz was born Obed by Ruth..."

I don't know whether there was something in his blood that predisposed him toward Gentile women but you see, it's rather interesting.

> "...to Obed, Jesse; and to Jesse was born David the king."

So she was the mother of Boaz and the great-grandmother of King David. Then, going down to the end of the genealogy in verse 16:

> "...to Jacob was born Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ [or Messiah]."

So she was a direct ancestress of the Messiah. That's why I say I cannot think of any greater example of the grace of God anywhere in the Bible than to take a woman who was a harlot living in a city under a curse and doomed to be destroyed by the judgment of God, protect her and all her family, cause her to be married to a prince of Israel, become the mother of Boaz, the great-grandmother of David and the ancestress of the Messiah. So never set limits to the grace of God. It is limitless.

Also, if you have unsaved relatives, here's a real encouragement. Because, I believe a father, in a certain sense, has a right to claim his family for the Lord. Rahab was not a father. She just had a big heart and lots of faith. I think the two really go together. I sometimes question the Lord about some of the people who He uses in the church. Of course, you would never do that! I think, "Lord, why so and so? I could point out a lot of weaknesses in him." And I felt the Lord has given me the answer more than once. "Well, I couldn't find anybody else who would believe Me."

Then I've come to see men who have faith usually have big hearts. They may have other failings. The men who raise millions of dollars for some project for the Lord, believe me, that's not easy. It takes a lot of stress, prayer and hard work to do it. Why did they do it? Because they've got a big heart, that's why. That's not universally true but it's generally true. Remember, God looks at the heart and not at the outward appearance.

Let's look then at P.7 and P.9, we've already seen, we don't need to mention them. Rahab's scarlet thread was her confession.

Then the next principle which we haven't seen before, P.15, which is the last one in our list: our response to God's representatives is reckoned as our response to God. The spies were God's representatives. The way she treated them was reckoned by God as the way she related to Him Himself. Look at one of the three Scriptures given there, the other two we don't have time, you can look at them for yourself. Luke 10:16. Jesus is sending out disciples and He says this:

> "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

That's solemn words. Be careful how you treat God's servants. Most of them are not perfect but they're still His representatives. Your attitude to them will be reckoned as your attitude to God.

Continuing at Hebrews 11:32:

> "And what can I yet say? For the time would run out on me as I went through the record of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel and the prophets..."

I think he had the same problem I did: time ran out on him! There's some further examples of faith and he says at this point, "I don't have time to go into all of these in detail," but he mentions them.

Then in the next six verses he gives a whole summation of the many achievements of their faith. I'll just read it,

translate. It says of them:

> "Who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice..."

You can say "worked righteousness" but I think the meaning is "administered justice."

> "...obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made powerful, became strong in battle, repulsed the invasion of the aliens. Women received their dead restored to them through resurrection; others were tortured, not receiving their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; still others endured mockings and scourgings, and also bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were tempted, they were sawn in two, they perished by the sword; they went around in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill treated (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in desert places and mountains and caves and holes of the earth."

That's quite a list, isn't it? I'm not going to dwell on that at length, I'll just read through the list of their achievements and I'm going to suggest to you that it's a good way for you to go further is to check those records for yourselves. As I say, in the New American Standard almost every one of those things that they did has a reference somewhere to the Old Testament. Reading the accomplishments, reading from the note outline at the bottom of Page 11/5.

They conquered kingdoms. I've put examples of specific ones: Barak, Gideon, Jephthah and David. They administered justice. Essentially that's true of all the judges and of David.

They obtained promises. That's probably true of most of them. I think particularly of Gideon and David.

They shut the mouths of lions. There's one obvious example of that which is Daniel. They quenched the power of fire. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Escaped the sword. The examples I gave were Elijah and Daniel, and you could add David. Dead children restored to life. Elijah and Elisha.

Then this terrific list: endured torture, mockery, scourging, chains, imprisonment, stoning, being sawn in two, massacre, exile, destitution, ill treatment, the life of refugees. I put there find your own examples. You can find most of those in the Old Testament mainly in the historical books. Sawn in two you won't find in the Old Testament but an ancient tradition relates that that was what happened to the prophet Isaiah through King Manasseh the son of Hezekiah. He was put in a hollow tree trunk and then the tree trunk was sawn in two. So when you're thinking about what you're going to accomplish by faith, don't leave that out. Some people have got a very limited view of what faith will enable you to do.

The principle there is P.16: Faith is manifested in many different ways corresponding to the ways that God allots faith. It's very important we don't get a limited tunnel vision of what faith will do. Let's look for a moment in Romans 12:3. Paul says:

> "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."

Paul brings out three important points there about true faith and there's a kind of false religious faith which doesn't produce the same results. Faith essentially goes with humility. The people whom Jesus in the gospels praised most for their faith were the humblest. The Syro-Phoenecian woman who said, "Lord, I'm just a dog but all I need is a crumb," got the greatest commendation for faith of anybody in the entire gospels. "Oh woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee even as thy will.—Help yourself, just tell Me what you want."

The other was the Roman centurion who said, "I'm not worthy that You should come under my roof, but You just have to say the word and my servant will be healed." Jesus said of him, "I haven't found such great faith anywhere in Israel." It's rather interesting, isn't it? There's two outstanding examples of faith. Neither of them were Israelites. It's almost as if excessive familiarity with religion deadens its impact. I think that's true of multitudes of Christians today.

The second point about faith there in Romans 12:3 is that it enables us to have sound judgment. I'm impressed by the people who have real faith, they're very realistic. They don't use big language, they don't indulge in fantasy. They tell it like it is. And you know who else does that? The Holy Spirit. When I get people coming up for prayer who have big words, my heart sinks. I think, "Lord, this isn't going to work." I remember a man came up for healing years ago. I said, "Do you have faith?" He said, "I've got all the faith in the world." From that moment on I knew he wouldn't be healed. And he wasn't. You don't need all the faith in the world, you just need a little bit of faith.

Then the third principle there in that verse is that God has allotted to each a measure or a proportion of faith. We don't all have the same amount of faith; we don't all have the same kind of faith. There's great variety in the body—I'm glad there is. I don't like being with people who all talk the same religious language and all dress alike. You know, when you've seen one of them you've seen them all! Let me take examples outside the body of Christ. You see one Mormon, basically you've seen all Mormons. They all look alike. I respect many things about the Mormons but they have stamped people out in one mold. God doesn't deal with people like that. If you're going to be in the body of Christ you've got to learn to put up with some rather strange people. They aren't all just the way we think they ought to be.

The principle is this: God has allotted to you the measure of faith that's needed for what He has for you to do. See? If you're going to have to wander around in a goatskin, God will allot you that kind of faith. But if He wants you to raise the dead, it may be a different kind of faith. You'll only find what your faith is for when you find your place in the body because Paul goes on in this chapter to say, "We have many members but it's one body." Not all the members have the same function. So, your function goes with your faith. If you are always struggling for faith, you may be almost sure that you're not in the right place in the body. You are probably a toe trying to act like a finger. It never really works.

If you're not thinking about faith, if your life isn't a continual effort to have faith, you're probably in the right place. See, my hand has no problem acting like a hand. I don't even have to think about what I want to do with my hand. But if I wanted to pick my Bible up with my toes, I'd be struggling. So I say that because there's a real harmony in the life in God between your faith and your function.

We're going—can you believe it? We've got to the last two verses! This is a kind of summation of all these great heroes of the Old Testament. Verses 39–40.

> "These all, having been attested through their faith, did not obtain the promise..."

Notice, they obtained promises but they didn't obtain "the promise." What was "the promise?" I would say it's the Messiah. Nothing was ever going to be really complete without the Messiah. Everything revolved around Him. He is the answer. God doesn't have a lot of answers, He has one answer and it's Jesus.

Why didn't they obtain the promise? Verse 40:

> "...because God had provided [or seen in advance] something better for us..."

The root meaning of the word is to see something in advance and hence, to provide it.

> "...that without us they should not be made perfect."

Let's look at the comments on that briefly. All those listed above obtained God's commendation by their faith, but not the final consummation. Perfection could come only through the death and resurrection of Jesus. There are really two kinds of salvation. There's Old Testament salvation and New Testament salvation. Old Testament salvation looks ahead to something not yet accomplished through figures, types, prophecies. It never saw clearly; it just saw indistinctly there was something there, they got some impressions of it but what it was actually going to be they couldn't see.

New Testament salvation looks back to a historical event: the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Until that had taken place, people were only saved by God's forbearance because the final provision for forgiveness for sins had not yet been made. The writer of Hebrews says earlier all the Old Testament sacrifices were a remembrance again made of sins every year. For instance, the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement covered sin for one year only till the next sacrifice was due the next Day of Atonement. But when Jesus had risen from the dead, a new kind of salvation, a perfect salvation, was immediately made available.

Yet, even that salvation is not perfect really until the resurrection of the body. Though we look back to the event that made perfect salvation possible, we're still looking forward to its consummation. This is always put before us

every time we partake of the communion, the Lord's Supper. Because, we do it in remembrance of His death—that's looking back—until He comes, looking forward. You may have heard me say this, but it's very clear and vivid. At the Communion, everything else of secondary importance fades into insignificance. We have no past but the cross and no future but the coming.

So that's a kind of principle of God. We're all kept looking for something. In 1 Thessalonians it says "God's people are waiting." We're a waiting people. Which takes more faith? To be active or to be waiting? Believe me, waiting takes more faith. That's one of the ways we have to demonstrate our faith. We have to wait for the coming of the Lord.

Going on here, "only together with us"—God deliberately makes His servants dependent on each other. So, all these great heroes of the Old Testament couldn't have what they were really looking forward to till we had entered into our portion. I think—this is just a personal opinion—the church will never enter into its full inheritance until Israel enters into theirs. So, we are also dependent on what God is committed to do for Israel.

Then, finally, just to close the outline on that chapter. Note the emphasis through this chapter on inheritance and perfection. You remember they go together. There's one other key concept which goes with inheritance and perfection. Rest, that's right. We find in our inheritance rest, and in that we come to perfection. The whole thrust of Hebrews, as I pointed out many times, is onward, forward and upward. It's not a book about people looking back, its whole message is don't stay where you are, move on. You haven't arrived, you're not perfect, your inheritance is ahead of you and you'll not find true rest until you enter into your inheritance.

Now, with a deep sigh of accomplishment we move into chapter 12. Let me just translate verse 1 and then we'll make some comments on it.

> "Therefore, we also having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, having laid aside every burden [everything that's bulky] and also the sin which so besets us, let us run with endurance [or perseverance] the race which is marked out before us."

The word is actually "a contest or a conflict," but we know it's a race because it's "run." So it combines two ideas which you can't combine in English. One is the idea of running a race and the other is the idea of fighting a fight or going through a conflict. So you cannot put them both together.

Now, turning to your outline I point out that this is the ninth "let us" passage. "Let us" do what? Let us run with endurance. It's a very conspicuous feature of Hebrews, this repetition of "let us." It's kind of the way we have to respond to the challenge to go on. As I pointed out, it represents a decision, and it's a corporate decision. This is where the body has to get it together because we're either going to go on together or we're not going to make much progress. The ninth "let us" passage is there at the beginning of chapter 12. Let us run with endurance.

In chapter 12 we will also be coming to the tenth "let us" passage, Let us show gratitude or have grace.

Now, verse 1 also opens up what I call the sixth passage of practical application. There are altogether seven of them. We have been through five, we're now coming to the sixth, which is also introduced by the phrase "let us." The practical application here is press on, endure discipline, be strong, pursue peace and holiness. I think I'll say them once again. That's just my summary. Press on, endure discipline, be strong, pursue peace and holiness.

Let's comment for a moment on verse 1 which is a very challenging verse. Like so many chapters in the writings of the New Testament, this one begins with a therefore. It depends what translation you have, this one says, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us." I've said so many times—and some of you can say it better than I can—when you find a therefore in the Bible, you want to find out what it's there for, because it always connects with something that's gone before. It's the practical outworking or application of something previously stated.

I think the therefore at the beginning of chapter 12 looks back to the whole list of the achievements of faith in chapter 11. In the light of the record of all these achievements of faith, what do we do? The answer is "we run with endurance the race set before us." However, it refers also to these witnesses when it says that we have "so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us." "Surrounding us" I understand to mean above us and all around us. That's my picture. "Witnesses" has two implications which are stated there. First of all, those who attest the victories of faith, they are witnesses to what faith can do. Secondly, it gives us a picture of spectators at a race. Remember that the ancient world, both Roman and Greek, was full of athletic contests which were run in big

stadium in the middle of big cities and they had seating for thousands of people all around. So the picture is we are running the race but in the stands all around are the witnesses watching us, cheering us on. Every time we get discouraged we look up and we see Moses there. Moses said, "I did it, you can do it. You can make it. Just keep your eye on the invisible, don't look away."

I've written there a little story which I read recently in a book that really touched me. I've put the example of a boy cricketer. You have to bear in mind cricket is my background, baseball I really don't understand. They've got certain things in common, they're both summer games, they're both very slow. More time is spent standing around doing things than in actual play. It's amazing to me that the English- speaking world tolerates either of them. But anyhow! I grew up playing cricket. My parents used to say they always knew what season of the year it was by how I reacted to stones. If I kicked them with my foot it was winter. If I picked them up and bowled them they knew it was summer!

This is the story about a man who was a very successful and famous cricketer. Believe me, before World War II in Britain, to be a successful cricketer was to be famous. The people who represented England at cricket were in the newspapers every day. Do you know that there was one great cricketer that became a great missionary, you know what his name was? C. T. Studd. He played cricket for Cambridge and for England. In the eyes of all the little boys, I mean, that was the highest achievement.

Anyhow, this cricketer later in life became completely blind but he had a son who followed in his footsteps and also became a very skillful cricketer. Then the father died and there was a cricket match just a day or two later and all the people expected the son wouldn't be playing because of his father's recent death. But instead, he turned up and he played better than he'd ever played before. His friends said to him, "How come you played so well just after your father's death?" He said, "Of course, that was the first time my father ever saw me play." I think that really sums this picture of the witnesses.

I really believe that those who have gone before have some awareness of what's going on. How they have it I'm not going to try to relate to you. In fact, I can't because I don't understand it. To me it's tremendously encouraging to think of all the prophets. There's Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and they're all praising us, clapping their hands and setting us an example.

In order to run this race successfully there are two things we have to lay aside. One is unnecessary burdens and the other is entangling sins. I think if you're thinking in terms now of a runner, the entangling sins would be like things that were wound around his limbs, especially his legs, that prevented free movement. Obviously he couldn't run successfully.

But the unnecessary burdens would be things that he had stuffed in his pocket. He might take his Boy Scout knife out or he might carry money or who knows what. I think when we watch really expert runners we realize that they strip themselves down to the absolute minimum, they don't carry one single ounce of unnecessary weight because it'll spoil their achievement.

So the writer of Hebrews says it isn't just giving up sins, we've got to give those up. They'll entangle us, they'll bind us, they'll hold us back. But also we've got to lay aside unprofitable burdens. And I wrote there "think of examples." I'll just share with you a little. One of the areas that I'm most careful about is my mind. I do not burden my mind with anything unnecessary. I don't let other people put their junk in my attic. I'm not saying this as an example but I would not be able to watch a television program and then come out and preach. I would not be able to do it. Because I watch television so seldom that it makes the most tremendous impact on me. I can't even sleep at night after it. I'm different from you and I'm not saying you should be like me, but that's one of the conditions in my life for being a successful teacher. I have to keep my mind pruned, no excessive burdens of any kind.

What about excessive talkativeness? It's not exactly sinful, but it can completely deaden your spirituality. Some people hang all day on the telephone. I happen to hate the telephone so it's no temptation for me. I'm certainly not saying everybody should be like me. If you ever get to speak to me on the phone it's something of a miracle because I have a system of protection against phone calls!

Now I am not saying everybody should be like me because lots of people couldn't do that. But I'm wondering if you were to sit down and think, Am I trying to carry something in my pocket and run a race? who knows what it might be. See, it's not necessarily a sin; it just doesn't enable you to run your best. I suggest those of you that are concerned, you take a little while with the Lord and ask Him if you're carrying something bulging in your pocket which prevents you from running the way you ought to run.

Let's look at two passages which also speak about the Christian life as a race. It's one of the commonest

examples. First Corinthians 9:24–27. Dear Paul, notice how he begins.

> "Do you not know ..."

You can be sure when he says that most people don't know. At least they act as if they didn't know.

> "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win."

Now the conditions for winning a race are pretty specific. We either meet them or we don't.

> "Everyone who competes in the game exercises self-control in all things."

How true that is of modern athletics. And the self-control relates to every area: entertainment, reading. A proficient athlete has to go into his contest with the right mental attitude. In fact, some say it's more important than the physical training.

I always give the example of a ballet dancer because that was so familiar to me. If you are going to be a proficient ballet dancer you take care of what you eat, you take care of your associations, your reading, you cultivate a certain outlook, you make certain friends and you don't permit yourself certain exercise. You don't go swimming, because swimming develops the wrong muscles. There's nothing wrong with swimming, it just doesn't go together with your chosen career. I know, believe me. I've known ballet dancers who are far more dedicated to their ballet than most Christians are to their Christianity. They have to start when they're four or five years old, that's the latest. And from then on, for the next thirty years it's a life of rigorous self-discipline.

Christians don't succeed in any other way. The conditions are simple. Paul says:

> "They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."

The word wreath is often translated "crown," but it's a laurel wreath, which was placed on the brows of victors in the Olympic Games. Of course, the laurel wreath withered after a day or two. Paul says we are running for a wreath that will never wither. Then he goes on, this is the application:

> "Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim..."

One of the things you can't afford to do when running is turn around and look behind you too often. That's fatal. And how many Christians don't perform their best because they keep turning around to look at something behind them?

> "...I box in such a way, as not beating the air..."

I know what I'm aiming at. Oh, for so many years when I dealt with the forces of evil I was like a boxer blindfolded just lashing out with my fists, hoping that somehow I might land on my opponent. Very rarely did I. Then God opened my eyes to the spiritual, unseen world. Today I have a pretty good knowledge of what I'm aiming at and generally, I succeed in hitting it.

> "...I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified."

Let me make this observation. The body is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. You have to make up your mind who's the master and who's the servant.

Then in Philippians 3, a very similar picture but Paul here speaks in the present of himself. Verses 13–14:

> "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Notice again the whole trend is onward and upward. Notice how careful he is to say he doesn't look back, he forgets that which is behind.

Then, still going through the outline, our race is a marathon, not a dash. The primary requirement is endurance or perseverance. Let's look at the one Scripture quoted there, Romans 5:3–4.

> "And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations..."

Is that true of you? “Praise the Lord, I’m in tribulation!” Do you say that? Why did he exult in his tribulations? Because he knew what it was doing.

> “...knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance...”

Shall I tell you how to learn perseverance? By persevering, there’s no other way.

We were talking to some Christian friends of ours about what we went through at the house this summer when the inner wall had to be torn down and rebuilt and the whole house was upside down and filled with noise and dust for two months. They said, “What did you learn?” I stopped for a moment and I thought and said, “Patience.” There is no other way to learn patience, that’s all, you just have to go through something. Going on, Romans 5:4.

> “...and perseverance [produces] proven character...”

That’s the best translation, there’s a number of different translations. There’s a difference between people who believe and people who’ve proved they believe. It’s easy to say, “I believe in healing,” until you get sick. That’s when you know whether you really do believe in healing or not.

> “...and proven character, hope...”

People who’ve been through the test and come out victorious are optimistic people. So bear that in mind.

We’ll look at one more verse, I think we can just squeeze it in. Verse 2. This is how we must conduct ourselves in this race.

> “Looking away to the beginner and the completer of our faith, Jesus, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right of the throne of God.”

So, the key to success is in those words. “Looking away from ourselves to Jesus.” I’ve given the reference there. Moses endured as seeing him who was invisible.

Jesus provides two things. The example, the cross is the way to the throne. And inspiration, He is as competent to perfect our faith as He was to initiate it. Why don’t you look those Scripture references up for yourself? Ephesians 2:4–6, which says we died with Him, we were made alive with Him, resurrected with Him, enthroned with Him. Remember, the cross is the way to the throne. No other way leads to the throne. And 2 Timothy 2:11–12 says if we died with Him we shall also live with Him.

Then the other reference, Revelation 22:13, Jesus says, “I am the Alpha and Omega, beginning and ending, the first and the last.” The emphasis is He begins everything and everything is perfected and completed in Him. That’s true of our Christian experience. It begins with Him and it ends with Him. We’re successful while we’re looking away from ourselves to Him.

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Sermon

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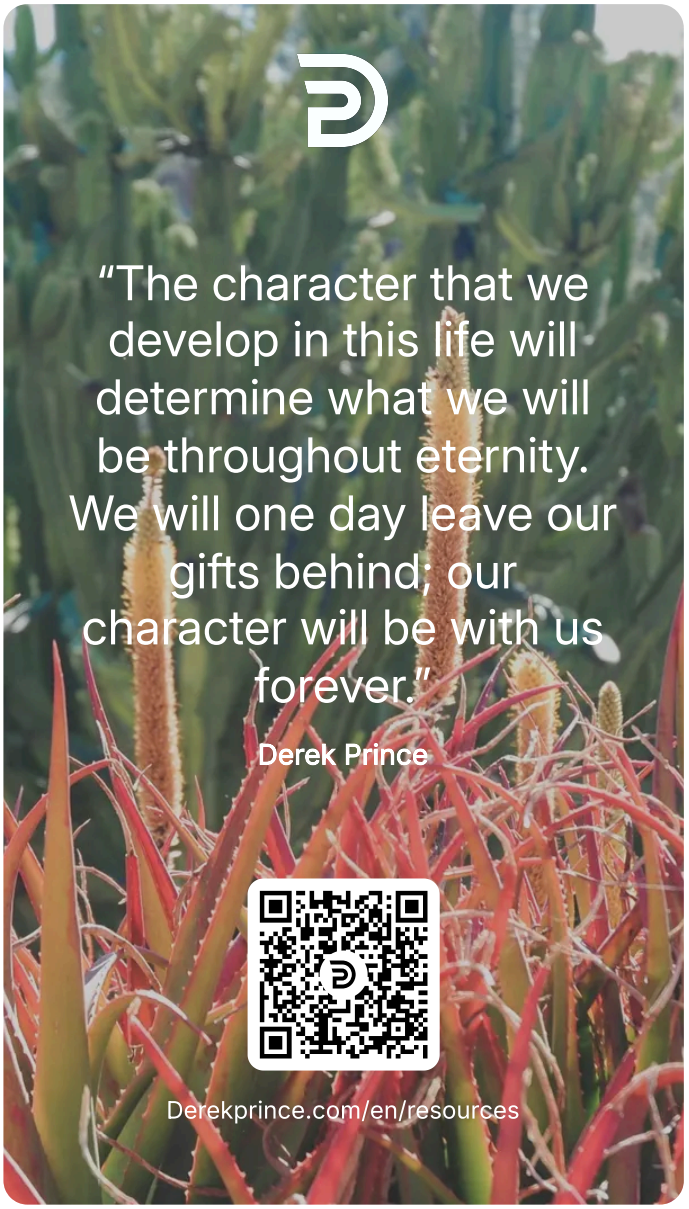

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