



By Faith (Part 1) – Look To Jesus

Pastor Jerry Gillis – February 19, 2017

How many of you recognize this? "Inconceivable". Those of you who are younger may not remember this, but the year I think that I graduated high school there was this movie called "The Princess Bride". And there was this little Sicilian character in there who was kind of the, in the first half of the movie he was the antagonist, and his name was Vizzini. And he would use this term over and over and over again about everything, 'inconceivable'. You know, I mean he would just do that all the time, right? There's this little bitty guy. And he had with him kind of this, you know, his other bandits that were part of this antagonism, and one was Andre the Giant, but I think his name in the movie was Fezzik. And then there was Inigo Montoya, the Spaniard who was a great swordsman, he was great, Inigo Montoya, "you killed my father, prepare to die", you know, it was awesome. I loved him, he was like the most memorable character in the whole movie. And then there was the hero of the story who was the masked man is what they called him for a little while, Dread Pirate Roberts and then, but his real name was Westley. And he was chasing after his love

and wanting to make sure that he tracked down his true love. And I guess she had been captured.

And so, Vizzini and his two crew, his henchmen were gone with him and they were running in this one scene in the movie where they climbed up this cliff on a rope. And obviously when you have a seven-foot tall giant it was easy enough for him to do. And he had Vizzini and the Spaniard, Inigo Montoya, they were on his shoulders, and he just crawls up this rope up this huge cliff. And then they get to the top, and sure enough they see chasing them, Westley, the masked man, the hero. And he starts going up the rope really fast, I mean he looks like a navy seal man, he's just like you know, he's going up. And they're at the top, looking down and Vizzini basically gives the order to cut the rope, so that that will be the end of the masked man. And so they cut the rope, and then they look over, and they realize that the masked man, Westley is actually still holding onto the cliff. He was able to hold on even though they cut the rope. And Vizzini says: "He did not fall? Inconceivable!" To which Inigo Montoya looks at him and says "You keep using that word, I do not think it means what you think it means."

If you haven't seen the movie you should, it's a cute movie called the "Princess Bride". But I think we've all been guilty maybe from time to time of using words that we didn't actually know what the word meant even though we were using it. We were misappropriating the word. My wife reminded me at the beginning of this message when we were sitting down there that she used to think that the group, you know, the duo, Daryl Hall and John Oates, Hall and Oates, she used to think that that said "Hauling

Oats". Hey are you listening to that song yet, what is that song "Man Eater"? Oh, that's by Hauling Oats. No, that's by Hall and Oates.

I had a friend that I grew up with, went to high school with and all that, and he's now a campus pastor at a church in Atlanta, wonderful guy, I mean great, you know, loves the Lord. But he had a way of misappropriating words. I won't tell you his name, Eddie. I hope he's not watching. I'm sure he's not, he's got a job today too, so there's no way he's watching me. That may be his name, it rhymes with schmeddy, if you're trying to figure it out. He used to say things like this when we were back working, like in college or whatever and we were working in the summer. And we didn't make a whole lot of money but he would work and he'd be like "Hey, man, I didn't work a ton but I know I've got to pay my taxes, any of you guys know a good taxidermist?" Eddie, I do not think that word means what you think it means.

He is also one that I'll still never forget this, it's like the greatest of all times, he still is the one who actually answered the question when asked about his position on euthanasia, he responded by saying "I think we should help them, I think the youth in Asia or the the youth in the United States need our help". I do not think that means what you think it means, Eddie.

There was this radio bit down in the south that used to come on, it was absolutely hilarious, and it was the same kind of idea, it was called "Spelling with Chuck". And we would hear it on the radio, it would just come on and it would be "Spelling with Chuck". And then you'd have this

one vocabulary word for the day and then Chuck, the personality on the radio, Chuck would spell it and then use it in a sentence. It would go something like this: "The word for today is 'nachos'. Spell it Chuck. N-a-c-h-o-s. Use it in a sentence. That car is mine, nachos. Chuck had an incredible way of turning words upside down. You say, Chuck, what's the word for today? Indiscreet. He would spell it, then use it in a sentence. I told those kids they were going to get hurt if they keep playing indiscreet. And I was like, that's not it. I don't know what that means. My favorite was the word juxtapose. He said, he spelled it and then he said "Chuck, use it in a sentence." He's like, I'm 5'7" and I can almost dunk a basketball, juxtapose I was 6'5". I loved it.

All of us are probably guilty at some point of "that word does not mean what we think it means", right? Now, that's hilarious when you're talking about words that aren't very consequential, but it's not so funny when you talk about words that are really consequential. For instance, the word faith. I mean, if there's a word that we don't want to mess up, like if we're building a top-ten list of things for people of Jesus to know what we're talking about when we talk about it? This would probably make the list, faith. Yet, in the culture that we live in and sometimes even in the churches that we gather in, we actually use that word I think in ways that are inconsistent with the nature of the word. Sometimes we think it means what it means, but we've actually realized it's not what it means.

For instance. Sometimes we think the word 'faith' is just a substitute word for the word 'religion'. In other words it would go something like this: "I'm a person of faith, I go to church" or something like this: "Oh, I've practiced

faith all my life. I was baptized as a baby and I went to confirmation, I've practiced faith all my life." Of course, you didn't have any say in that decision, by the way. I don't know if you remember that. You didn't have any say in that. But that's kind of how we use it as a substitute word for 'religion'.

Or maybe it's an anti-intellectual profanity that some people use. Here's what I mean by that. Oh, you don't even want to talk to those church people because they don't pay attention to anything scientific, they just believe in blind faith. It's like an anti-intellectual kind of statement against people. And they're using that kind of in a different way. They usually like to insert 'blind' faith as opposed to just regular faith, they just put blind faith in there, right?

Or maybe we use it as a placebo for pain. This word 'faith' we use as a placebo for pain and here's what I mean. You know what a placebo is right? It's like fake medicine. It's what they use often as a control when they're testing medications, and they give people fake medicine that doesn't do anything but people, maybe in their minds think that it does something. Well, sometimes we use the word 'faith' as a placebo for pain. Oh, man, I'm so sorry you lost your job. You've just got to have faith. What? Or man, I know you've been going through a really difficult time. You just need to have faith that it's all going to work out. What?

Or, maybe we use the word like a Harry Potter spell. I don't remember any of the names of those spells, some of you that are Harry Potter people are going to be like, 'don't even bring it up if you don't know the spells', right?

You talk to a Harry Potter person, like they know their stuff and then us people who are dabbling in the Harry Potter world, we have to just like get out in a hurry. Because we know we're going to come up against Harry Potter experts. So I don't remember the name of the e pluribus unum spell or whatever it was, like, that's not real, I got that off a coin. It's Latin, in case you don't know what it means. "Out of many, one". Thank you. So, we use faith that way, right? If I just have enough faith, I can speak anything into existence that I want to happen. If I just have enough faith, I'll never be sick, I'll never be poor, none of those things will ever happen to me. If I just have enough faith.

Here's the thing. All of those kinds of miss-uses or misunderstandings of what faith is have consequences. Because the world around us sometimes looks at the way that we think about the idea of faith and they get kind of weirded out, because they're thinking to themselves, ahh. You know like, when we use it as a substitute word for religion, people then associate the word faith with failing institutions that are known more by what they're against than what they're for.

Or when we kind of use the word faith as kind of like an anti-intellectual profanity, people look at the church and think to themselves oh, they won't even engage in any truth that is out there, whether that's scientific or academic or in the arts, they just won't engage any of that, because they just want to live within their bubble. That's what they think. Right or wrong, that's what they think.

And then maybe we use it as a placebo for pain, and unfortunately it causes people a misunderstanding of what faith is, because maybe some well-meaning person told them hey, you've just got to have faith that it's all going to work out, and then it didn't work out. And they wonder "I don't know what you're selling, but I'm not interested in buying any of it."

Or maybe they see the opulent lifestyles of those purported preachers who are flying around in private jets and living in multi-million dollar homes and making an empire for themselves on this prosperity sham. Because they're using faith to discuss it. And people think to themselves, I want no part of this, because this sounds a lot less like faith and a lot more like fleece.

You see, this has consequences for us. So when we start to ask the question what faith is, we've got to make sure that what we're saying to the world is not something that they look at us and they say "Hey, church, you keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means." So, what does it mean? I wish we had a definition for it like in the Bible. We do. But sometimes when you read a definition, it doesn't always clear things up for you, does it? Sometimes you have to unpack it a little bit more and understand it a little bit better. Because some of us maybe have even memorized this definition of faith that we're going to be launching into here in Hebrews chapter 11, maybe we've memorized it, but we still don't actually know what it's talking about.

Listen to how the Scripture records it in Hebrews 11 verse number 1. It says: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about

what we do not see." Now that may or may not have cleared some things up for you, but I don't know if it did or it did not. You see, what we have to understand when we come to this kind of definition, is even if that's starting to not make sense to us, we've got to ask ourselves a couple of questions about what these words mean. Like for instance, when we look at the word here - confidence. Now faith is confidence. Some of your translations say "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." Some of your translations say "Faith is being sure of what you hope for." Some translations refer to it as faith is the 'foundation' of what we hope for. That's what the word means, it means confidence or assurance or certainty or foundation. It means all of those things, that particular word does. It can also mean assurance.

But we have later on here another word "assurance". That faith is confidence or a foundation of what we hope for, and assurance about what we do not see. That's actually, this word is actually a different word than this word in the Greek language. Even though sometimes they can be translated similarly. Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance, or evidence, or proof, or being sure of, that's what assurance means but some of your translations say "being sure of what we do not see".

Then we start looking at this definition and we realize, huh, that's interesting, I kind of have a tendency sometimes to think about faith and hope kind of in the same vein. And the truth is they are a bit in the same vein, but what we see very clearly here is that faith is being defined by

using the word 'hope' in the definition, right? Which tells me that faith and hope aren't exactly the same, but they are linked together.

Now, if I have successfully confused you, I'm not trying to. What I'm doing is I'm saying, that we read this definition from time to time because we have a definition of faith, and sometimes we can't quite put our arms around what exactly it's trying to say to us. Now, it's not my intention to try and reword the Scripture, the Scripture is plenty good without me. But sometimes we can say it in a way that it maybe makes a little bit more sense to us, that captures the heart of what's being said there.

One way that I might say this is this way: Faith is hope's foundation, and is a telescope for the future. Faith is hope's foundation, and is a telescope for the future. In other words when we say, like it does in the text, that faith is confidence in what we hope for, what that means is is that what's underlying hope as it's foundation is faith. That's what hope rests upon. It rests upon faith. Faith is hope's foundation. But then it also says is that with that foundation we have an assurance about what we do not see.

What do telescopes enable us to do? They enable us to see things that we cannot see with our naked eye. Things that are too far away, what they do is they actually give us an ability to see things that are far away, and actually bring them closer as if they are much nearer than they really are.

That's what faith does. Faith gives us an opportunity to see what we cannot see, and it feels like it even brings it closer to us than we could have imagined.

Now, the reason that I bring this up is because it's important for us to understand that this particular definition, Hebrews 11:1, that "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see", that definition, if we pull it out of its context and just plop it down, it can become pretty much whatever we want to make it. In fact, it can become any of those things that I mentioned earlier in the wrong ways to use this idea of faith, if we just pull it out and plop it down. Here's why. Because that definition is talking about faith's essence, it's not talking about faith's object. Or is it?

Now in the actual text itself, you kind of look and you go well no, it's actually talking about the essence of faith. Faith is being certain or confident of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see or assured of what we do not see. I don't know that there's anything in there about the object of our faith, but it definitely talks about the essence of our faith. Well, there is, and there's a word that I would point out that if you miss it, then you might miss what you're trying to find. It's in the definition itself and it's a very small word. But for your purposes, let's look at it in Hebrews 11:1. Does any of this look different than the rest? Like right in this area. NOW, faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. NOW. That's a little Greek word *de*, it seems unimpressive. But the word can be translated now, perfectly, that's a great way to translate it, now. But it can also be translated but, moreover, therefore. So when we see that word, NOW, when you see that word now, you are reminded that what comes after it has to be informed by what comes before it. This isn't meant to just be clipped out of our text and lifted

out just talked about in kind of ethereal or essential essence terms. It actually is bigger than that.

And so the only way for us, in my mind to actually understand what the NOW is trying to get us at when it talks about this definition of faith, is to go back to let's say the beginning of the book. And if we go back to the beginning of the book of Hebrews what we find when we survey the book of Hebrews is that this may very well be the most Christ-centered book in the whole of the New Testament. It's arguable. It's a big book. But the whole of it is talking about how Jesus is superior to anyone and anything that you might want to put your confidence in other than Him. Even if they are good things, even if they are God-given things, none of them actually compare to putting your confidence, your trust and your hope in the person of Jesus Himself. He is the object of our faith.

To survey that, I want to do that, because it's important that we see it. Let's survey some things that the Scripture tells us that Hebrews tells us Jesus is superior to, or more superior than.

The first thing that I can note, right at the very beginning is that Jesus is superior to the prophets. The prophets were wonderful people, but they were people like me and you. They were prone to doing things that weren't consistent with God's will, but yet God would speak to them and speak to His people through them. But Jesus is superior to them. Listen to how Hebrews opens up in chapter 1 verse number 1: "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom he appointed heir

of all things, and through whom also He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After the Son had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." Jesus is superior to the prophets, even though they're great.

Jesus is also superior to the angels. Created beings that we see pop up through the history of God's people on earth. Notice what Hebrews 1 goes on to say in verse number 4: "So Jesus became as much superior to the angels as the name He has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'? Or again, 'I will be His Father, and He will be my Son'?" You see, Jesus is superior even to the angels.

You know, people say to me sometimes, man, you know, like God gave me an angel. Thank God, because God uses angels as ministering spirits, and sometimes He has some looking out for us as we would call them 'guardian angels', the Scripture doesn't say it exactly that way, but none the less, angels are ministering spirits on our behalf. Some of you have a whole posse of them because you need overtime, right? You've got a whole bunch of them. Right? Someone like me, in fact I'm thinking to myself, you're going to have to bring some because, I need all the help that I can get, right? But listen, God's given us better than an angel. His Son is superior, because His Son made them. That's what we have to keep in mind. The Son is superior to the prophets, the Son is superior to the angels.

And by the way, you might want to start looking at rock star people in Israel's history like Moses and you'll find out that Jesus is superior to Moses even. Moses is revered in Judaism, and as well he should be, he should be honored as a man of God who got used in significant ways. But listen to what Hebrews 3 says: "Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house," what a wonderful statement about a servant of God, "bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are His house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory."

Jesus is superior to the prophets, to the angels, to Moses, to Joshua, the one who finally led the people into the Land of Promise to give them the promised rest. Yet Hebrews chapter 4 beginning in verse 8 says this: "For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience." And that rest is found by faith in Jesus Christ that He is our Sabbath rest. He's superior even to Joshua.

But you'll find He's superior to the priesthood, like Aaron. Aaron is kind of the beginning of the priesthood. You see, Hebrews starts to make the argument that even though there are a bunch of priests that Jesus is in a different category altogether. He led an indestructible life on the order of Melchizedek the Scripture says. Not in the Aaronic priesthood. Listen to what it says in Hebrews chapter 5: "Every high priest is selected from

among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was. In the same way, Christ did not take on Himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to Him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." And He says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission." You see, because He was both priest and sacrifice. "Son though He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered and, once made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek." Jesus is superior to all of the priests who have ever lived. It's why He's called the Great High Priest.

But He's also superior to the Old Covenant. This is the argument. Hebrews just keeps going on. It's making this argument about how Jesus is superior to all these things. Listen to what it says in Hebrews 8 verse number 6. But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior - you wondering why I keep choosing that word superior, right? Because it keeps showing up in the text! The ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new

covenant is established on better promises. Promises that only came through the redemption that is Jesus Christ.

But Jesus is also superior to the Tabernacle, the place where the priests acted and the place where the sacrifices were made. Listen to what it says in Hebrews chapter 9. Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! That's great news, right? You're clapping for God's revelation of superiority of Jesus Christ.

And in fact, He even throws in another one for good measure. Jesus is superior to The Law. Listen to what the Scripture says in Hebrews 10 as this argument is coming to a close. The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest, Jesus, had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right

hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. What great news is that! The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, - no longer are they going to be on tablets of stone - I'm going to write them on their hearts, and I going to write them on their minds." Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." What a new covenant! What a new law that is written on our hearts!

Jesus is superior. You see, the reason I'm doing this is because our definition tells us that we need to. We can't just understand the essence of faith without understanding the object of our faith. That's why the writer says NOW, therefore, moreover, this is what the essence of faith looks like because this is who is the object of our faith. Are you following me? That's why in chapter 10 it begins to summarize for us all that has been said so far in the book of Hebrews, and it gives us this charge which is going to give our ears something to perk up about because we're going to hear the seeds of where the definition in 11 - chapter 11 - comes from.

Listen to Hebrews chapter 10, verse 19. Therefore, brothers and sisters - in other words in light of all of this - since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God - you hear all these things are starting to come together. He's summarizing them all. Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our

hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Then listen to this. Faith and hope still linked together - let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess.

You see, this is really important for us, ladies and gentlemen, because when we realize the full assurance that faith brings, and we can hold unswervingly to the hope that we profess, we have to ask the question: why can we do this? Why can we have the full assurance of what faith brings, and why can we hold unswervingly to the hope we profess? Verse 23 of Hebrews chapter 10 answers it. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, FOR HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL. The object of our faith is Jesus.

Now, I know I've taken you through like a jet tour of Hebrews here real quickly, but it was imperative we did it because our definition compelled us to do that. You might be thinking to yourself, it didn't compel me to do anything. It compelled you to do it, and since you're compelled, I'm compelled. Now we're all compelled. But it's good that we did, because we need to understand not just the essence of faith, but the actual object of faith.

Now faith and hope are linked together. Remember I told you that? But they have to be a little bit different, because you use hope in the definition of faith. Let me see if I can unpack that for you here for a second. Think about it this way. You can write it down if you want but... Faith is looking first to Jesus and trusting Him for everything. And hope is looking first to the future, but trusting Jesus will get you there. I'll say it again if I can

remember what I just said. Faith is looking to Jesus first and trusting Him for everything. And hope, which is linked to it, is looking first to the future and trusting that Jesus will get us there. You see, this faith and hope are interwoven - intertwined and interwoven, became intertwined and I did not want to say that, because Jerry, you keep saying that word. I do not think it means what you think it means, right? Intertwoven. Please do not repeat that, all right? And if you do, I'm going to pretend like you made it up. I didn't.

They are intertwined for sure. They are interwoven for sure. But I think that in our definition, here's what I want you to note: In our definition in Hebrews 11:1, Now faith is confidence in what we hope for, assurance about what we do not see. I think there's even more than what we've just discovered, and it's good news. You see it's very true that what faith does is it gives hope a foundation. Right? Faith is being sure of what we hope for. The undergirding of hope is our faith. And it also acts as a telescope, because there are things that we cannot see in the future that have been promised by the Lord Jesus that we simply cannot see. But what faith acts as is a telescope that takes something we cannot see and gives us eyes to be able to see it, and brings it a little closer, like it's nearer than we think.

Faith is those things for sure, but I want to give you what I think is even better news - that's tremendous news, and it's all true, but let me add to that good news. I think because when the Scripture says faith is the substance of what we hope for, the confidence of what we hope for - that God actually - listen to this - God actually gives us a taste of what we cannot see in the future in the present. It's just a taste.

I know this is hard for us to wrap our minds around - for me too. So let me see if I can do it by way of a story. I was reading a story that turned out to be a really good illustration. Pretend if you will for just a moment that you are in the Sahara Desert in the middle of heat like you've never experienced before, by yourself. You're hot as can be. You're thinking about starting to drink sand. You're that thirsty, right? You are just parched. And as you are walking, here's what happens. You actually find a sign printed in the sand and here's what it reads: Ice Cold Water and a Refreshing Waterfall 40 Miles Ahead. Some of you are going, that's the most depressing sign you could possibly give to me at that moment. Well, it's better news than the sign being: Hey, You're Going To Die. Probably Wanting Some Water. You're Out Of Luck. HaHaHa. Nanny Nanny Boo Boo. If that were the sign you'd be like, now that's really bad news. The good news of this sign is that there is ice cold refreshing water that you can drink and there is a refreshing waterfall that you can come to in 40 miles. Now here's the problem. Forty miles you can't see. You can't lay your eyes on forty miles from now. And so you start asking yourself the question, how do I know? How do I know? Because I can't see it. How do I know? And you're stumped. And you look below the sign, and there's a box. And the box just says on the outside: Faith. You pick it up. You open it. There's a bottle of water and a note that says: Enjoy. There's a lot more where this came from.

You see, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the assurance of things we cannot see. Even if, even if we weren't given a nice cool refreshing drink that leads us to understand there's a waterfall coming - even if we

weren't, it would still remain true that the sign is exactly right. But God in His grace sometimes gets us a little bit to drink, doesn't He? On the way. He gives us a little bit to drink.

You know, for instance - this is what faith does, by the way. Because it turns our attention to Jesus. Maybe you're walking through the valley of loneliness because - for whatever reason - a relationship failure; you lost a spouse; you've been bullied at school; you had a parent that left you. And you're walking through this loneliness. You know what faith does? Faith tells you look to Jesus. And do you know what happens when you do that? It's as if in that moment that the cool water of His presence begins to refresh us by reminding us we are not alone even though we feel alone.

Or maybe you're walking through a health trial. You've gotten a bad report. What faith does is it calls us to look to Jesus because when we stare long enough we see His glory and we begin to understand His sovereignty - that He is in control of everything at all times. And it becomes like water for our soul that our sickness, or our trial is not causing Him to stumble around but that He can use it for His glory in whatever way He sees fit. That's what faith does.

Or maybe staring death in the face. Maybe it's your own. Maybe it's a friend of yours, a brother or sister in Jesus. What faith does is it calls us to look to Jesus. Because when we do, we start getting to know and understand that there is a waterfall of grace falling on us, because God raised Jesus from the dead. And even though we see death as a huge thing to be afraid of, Jesus is

superior to death, because we will be the first fruits of the resurrection of Jesus Christ if we put our faith in Him. This is what faith does.

You see faith, if I can simplify it for you, the object of our faith is Jesus, which means our job is to look to Him. Because when we do, hope then has a foundation, and we have a telescope to look through that actually brings what's in the future a little closer here, and maybe even we get to experience a little bit of it in the now. Look to Jesus.

That's what the writer of Hebrews is trying to get us to from chapter 1 all through what we're reading now in chapter 11. And we're going to examine some lives of these people in chapter 11 who walked by faith. But he's trying to ultimately get us to Jesus in chapter 12. That's why he says this: Therefore, since we're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders us and the sin that so easily entangles us and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, looking unto Jesus - looking unto Jesus - the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Look to Jesus and consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary in your struggle against sin. Look to Jesus. Look to Jesus. Look to Jesus.

Faith. The object of our faith is Jesus. It's hope's foundation. It makes the future clearer to us and closer than we think, and we even, maybe, get a drink of what that tastes like. But I want to remind you of this: if you're a believer, then I want to call you back to a life of faith. Our lives are meant

to be looking to Jesus. That we lay everything about who we are at His feet. And we look to Him for everything. That's what faith does.

But if you're here, and you've never before met Jesus, you can only do that by faith because it is by grace that you have been saved through faith. The grace that God has shown everyone of us who have made mistakes, who have fallen, who have sinned, who have come short of God's glory. That even while we were yet sinners, Christ still came - the One superior to everything - He still came and died for us and became sin for us so that in Him, through faith in Him we might become the righteousness of God. Where we were sinful and filthy and separated, now in Him we are chosen and beloved and righteous. That is because of His grace and by faith.

If you've never come to a place where you have received Jesus by faith, I hope that you'd let one of us help you understand what a relationship with God through Jesus looks like. When we dismiss in just a moment, out in the atrium is a room called the Fireside Room and there are some pastors, some friends in there who would love to take just a few moments and talk to you about what that relationship looks like. I hope that you'll come by. Because Jesus is superior to anything you're trying to put your trust in, I assure you. Even if it's yourself. Because He has said I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. And that only happens by faith.

So Father, we thank you for this truth that You've spoken to us today. We have been overwhelmed with a flood of Your word this day. May it cascade over our souls and may we glory in You, Lord Jesus. The One who is

superior and who reigns in supremacy to anything. The One at whose name every king will bow and the One to whose name every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. May you call us to a place, Lord, where we choose to walk by faith - a faith that You have actually given to us. May we return that confidence in the Person that can be trusted, the Lord Jesus. And that in so doing, we have a strong platform on which to stand to look to our future hope of what the renewal of all things will be. And may You give us tastes and glimpses even now of the hope that's to come. So whatever season we're walking through, I pray that we would bottom-line it by simply looking to Jesus because in that our perspective and our lives and our hope will be reshaped. We love you, God. We thank You for the glory of who You are. Help us in these next few weeks to learn what it means fully to walk by faith. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Love you folks. Have a great week.