

The Letter to the Hebrews: Hold Fast Your Confession of Hope

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The video versions is available at: https://youtu.be/assewl_WKVM

The scripture reading is Hebrews 10:19-13:25

The faith of the Jewish believers was shaken when the Sanhedrin ruled that all those who believed that Yeshua was the Messiah were cut off from Israel and were forbidden from entering the temple in Jerusalem. The author of Hebrews wrote to these believers to encourage them. He described Yeshua's commission as the "Sent One" from God as being higher than Moses or the angels; He came as the Son and Heir of God! He came to establish an eternal priesthood of an order like that foreshadowed by Melchizedek. Because of Yeshua's perfection as the Son of God, He is a worthy priest able to accomplish once and for all what Aaron and the Torah could not. Yeshua became our sin offering, our covenant sacrifice, and our atonement, making it possible for us to enter into God's rest.

Hebrews 10:19-23 NKJV 19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

The author of Hebrews now turns his attention to how this applies to the lives of these Jewish believers. How could and should they live after being cut off from the temple? What does this mean for their daily lives?

The world of these Jewish believers had been completely changed. All the daily and yearly rituals and practices that they had built their lives around was gone. No more could they go up to the temple and bring their Passover lambs. No more could they join the throngs at Yom Kippur and participate in the ceremony of making atonement for the sins of the nation for one more year. The author of Hebrews reminds them that daily life goes on and that it's the little things they do that are important.

Hebrews 10:24-25 NKJV 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

They are to focus on living every day for God supporting each other and building up the faith of their fellow believers! He warns, once again, about willfully turning against God, rejecting Yeshua as the Son of God, and turning to a sinful lifestyle.

Hebrews 10:28-29 NKJV 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

He reminds them of the trials and sufferings they and their fellow believers have already gone through. He reminds them of how they helped each other, when they were persecuted and put in prison for their faith and joyfully accepted it knowing that they were building up treasure in heaven. With this reminder, he encourages them to continue in the faith.

Hebrews 10:35-39 NKJV 35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Yeshua, in John seventeen, calls Judas Iscariot a son of perdition indicating that Judas is an example of one who drew back and went to perdition. The word translated as "perdition" is the Greek word "ap-o'-li-a," number 684 in Strong's Concordance meaning ruin, loss, or destruction either physical or spiritual. Those who draw back will experience the loss of their souls. Peter warns against those who promote ruinous doctrine resulting in destruction using the same Greek word ap-o'-li-a.

2 Peter 2:1 NKJV 1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

Yeshua said that those who reject His coming as the Son of God sent to bring salvation will experience the wrath of God.

John 3:36 NKJV 36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Those who persevere will experience the salvation of their souls. What does this saving faith look like?

Hebrews 11:1-3 NKJV 1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

The author of Hebrews cites numerous examples of people whose lives were recorded in the scriptures who had saving faith. He wrote about Abel's faith in bringing an offering acceptable to God. He wrote about Enoch's faith that resulted in him being taken into God's presence bypassing death! He wrote about Noah's faith in building an ark that resulted in salvation for his family. He cited Abraham's faith evidenced in so many of his actions. Abraham gave up his home and family to set off to a land unseen trusting that God would fulfill the promises of bringing him to a land he and his offspring would inherit forever. Yet, somehow Abraham knew the true city they would inherit was eternal.

Hebrews 11:8-10 NKJV 8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Like Abraham, all of these people of faith were seeking beyond the physical. They were all looking for and expecting life in the world to come.

Hebrews 11:13 NKJV 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Because of their steadfastness in their faith, not turning back to where they had come from, God has prepared a place for them.

Hebrews 11:16 NKJV 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Yeshua also spoke of the place prepared for us!

John 14:1-2 NKJV 1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

The author of Hebrews cited Abraham and Sarah's faith that God could and would give them a son even though both of them were past the age of child bearing! He wrote about Abraham's faith in offering up Isaac the son of the promise knowing that God could and would raise him from the dead.

Hebrews 11:17-19 NKJV 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

He cited the faith of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph about the promise of the inheritance of the land and things to come. He cited the faith of Moses' parents and Moses that God had the victory over the Pharaoh of Egypt. He cited the faith of Rehab of Jericho and the children of Israel when they defeated Jericho by the power of God's word.

Although the list could go on and on, the writer concludes with what all of these people of faith had in common. They all persevered despite opposition, beating, imprisonment and many other trials. They all persevered but they did not yet receive the promise.

Hebrews 11:39-40 NKJV 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

All of these people of faith who had gone before these Jewish believers would receive the promise of eternal life in the world to come at the same time as they would. They are in a sense among a great crowd of believers who are anticipating receiving the promise!

Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJV 1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

These people of faith that have gone before the Jewish believers in the first century were an encouragement to them in the trials they were facing. They are an encouragement to us today! Yet, if in spite of all these witnesses, they were still discouraged, the writer of Hebrews told them to look to the example Yeshua set for them.

Hebrews 12:3-4 NKJV 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

These trials they faced are not just because of their faith in Yeshua; these trials can be at times God's correction and a sign of being claimed by God as His children.

Hebrews 12:5-7 NKJV 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

James, the brother of Yeshua, wrote that trials lead to being perfected.

James 1:2-4 NKJV 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

So, as they endured trials, they are to be strong and steadfast. The writer of Hebrews, quoting Isaiah and Proverbs, encourages them to stand firm because victory is coming.

Hebrews 12:12-13 NKJV 12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

The image of weak hands and feeble knees reminds us of the battle the children of Israel fought with Amalek at the place where they first received water from the rock. During the battle, Israel prevailed when Moses held up his hands. When Moses' hands dropped the Israelites were beaten back.

Exodus 17:12-13 NKJV 12 But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

The battle the author of Hebrews refers to is not against an outside opponent; it is against their own sin nature which can allow bitterness to grow resulting in sin.

Hebrews 12:14-16 NKJV 14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.

After defeating Amalek, the children of Israel arrived and gathered at Mt. Sinai upon which God made His presence known through smoke, fire, lightning, and shaking of the mountain. The author of Hebrews said that God had not led them to this mountain where they entered into a covenant with God through the mediation of Moses. God led these Jewish believers to Mount Zion and the city of Jerusalem where the New Covenant was ratified.

Hebrews 12:22-24 NKJV 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made

perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

This gathering of people at Jerusalem consisted of those who are counted among the assembly of the faithful like those he mentioned in Hebrews eleven! These are the ones who were and are there to witness the New Covenant coming into force! With that in mind, the writer once again reminds the reader not to refuse the voice of God who, then, spoke from Mt. Sinai and now speaks from heaven!

Hebrews 12:25 NKJV 25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,

The author of Hebrews, then, begins to conclude his letter. He reminds them of the Torah principles to love each other, practice hospitality, honor marriage, and be thankful and content with what God has provided. He reminds them to honor their leaders in the faith and warns them about following strange doctrines.

Hebrews 13:9 NKJV 9 Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

It seems like this verse is telling the Jewish believers not to be concerned with eating clean or kosher foods. That is not with this is about at all! The Jerusalem believers met daily in the temple; they had to be careful of what they ate and came in contact with to maintain a state of ritual purity. They practiced a form of Judaism similar to that of the Pharisees in that they avoided eating “common” or “unholy” food. For example, Peter declared that he had never eaten anything unclean or common. First Fruits of Zion in [Chronicles of the Apostles](#) explains this practice.

“Unholy” (koinos) corresponds to the Hebrew *chullin*, and it means something common or ordinary—not sanctified for ritual purposes. Food and meat that fall into this category are not unclean or forbidden, but they cannot be used for sacred purposes. They may be eaten by people who are not ritually pure... Simon Peter and the other Jerusalem disciples tried to maintain a state of ritual purity because they congregated daily in the Temple courtyards.ⁱ

The author of Hebrews is stating that eating only ritually pure foods like the priests would eat did not profit them. The priests and those of the priests’ households who were ritually pure could eat the priests’ portion of the sin offering and the peace offering. However, believers could eat from an altar that the unbelieving priest could not eat from.

Hebrews 13:10-14 NKJV 10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. 11 For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. 12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13 Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. 14 For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

This altar that they could eat from was not in Jerusalem and not at the temple! This altar was separate from the earthly Jerusalem. It was literally as well as spiritually “outside” the city. It is to this altar that the writer urged his readers to take their spiritual sacrifices.

Hebrews 13:15-16 NKJV 15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. 16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

The Jewish believers were to continue to live their lives as they had while in Jerusalem having access to the Temple. The big difference was that they could no longer bring their gifts to the earthly temple. Instead, they were to bring gifts of their lips such as praises, love, and uplifting conversation. They were to focus on doing good works according to God's will. Having done this, they were to have confidence that Yeshua would perfect them in every good work as He continues to do for us today. Let me close with the benediction of the author of Hebrews.

Hebrews 13:20-21 NKJV 20 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Study Questions:

1. How does the author of Hebrews say believers are to encourage each other?
2. Discuss the comparison between those who draw near (Hebrews 10:22) and those who draw back (Hebrews 10:38-39).
3. Hebrews 11 opens with a definition of faith. Look up the words "hoped" and "evidence" in verse 1 in the Greek. What is faith in your own words? Which person in this chapter is the most encouragement to your faith and why?
4. How does Hebrews 12 invoke the image of the children of Israel arriving at Mt. Sinai and receiving the covenant there? In the broader sense, what comparisons does the author of Hebrews make between the events at Mt. Sinai and the events surrounding Yeshua's death and resurrection?
5. In what way is Hebrews 13:13-16 a summary of the letter to the Hebrews?
6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching or this study of Hebrews? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?

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ⁱ Chronicles of the Apostles. First Fruits of Zion. ©2011, 2016 D. T. Lancaster. Page 248.