



YEAR 3—The God Who Pursues Relationship: A Story of God's People

Module 6—Jesus and His Church

Lesson 6: Submitting to God's Way through Our Offerings and Sacrifices—Hebrews 11-13

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

(A theological and biblical reflection on today's Scripture passage.)

To live by faith is to abandon all confidence in self and all that we call our own—resources, possessions, wisdom, and other things that are visible and, instead having confidence in what is not always visible—such as God's provisions and promises. To be a person of faith is not merely to have an inner belief. Faith is also about an active obedience.

In Hebrews 11-13 we see two different but inseparable aspects of faith. First, we see faith that looks toward the future or something we hope for. Second, we see faith in what is invisible. Faith is when both of these aspects are in cooperation together putting confidence in God's complete rule or sovereignty.

Hebrews 11 (sometimes called faith's hall of fame) reveals the lives of people like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and many others. From their lives we can see their assurance and expectation in God. Like these men of the faith, the way that we see God and trust in God shapes our faith. Faith always has been a mark of God's servants. In the firm persuasion and expectation, that God will perform all God has promised to us in Jesus, we find the courage and the strength to serve in this world. Faith proves to the intellect the reality of things that cannot be seen by the bodily eye. Faith was the principle those mentioned in Hebrews 11. It is in their holy submission, extraordinary services, and enduring sufferings that we see faith at its peak in the lives of those mentioned in Hebrews 11.

Moses, out of faith, chose to be mistreated along with God's people. Moses chose to suffer (as a type or example of Christ) because he had faith that Abraham knew that God had told him, "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14) when He appeared in the burning bush, and because of this he left Egypt to fulfill the mission God called him to. This is a great example of the two inseparable aspects of faith that we mentioned above—a hope for the future and a hope in the unseen promises and provisions of God. Moses chose suffering rather than the pleasures of this world that all too often lead to sin. There is more evil in the "little sins" of this world than there can ever possibly be in the greatest suffering. Moses knew this and chose to be obedient to God's way as opposed to His own.

The people of God—Christians past, present and future—have always have been and will always be unfinished people, being perfected by faith. By faith we may be fully sure of God's wisdom, and of God's gracious and prevailing presence with us. Such faith enables believers to press on to the very end of the mission regardless of what might meet them along the way.

An authentic follower of Jesus is eager, not only to be in covenant with God, but in communion with the people of God. Followers of Jesus, in faith are willing risk, with others, what it means to live by faith, for the community of others. Rahab is the perfect example. By Rahab's willingness and work to be faithful to God and at the same time in community with people, God declared her to be just. Her works alone did not justify Rahab (because the works she did were not upright) but because of her desire to please God and others, God spares her life.

Faith will enable Christians to serve God and God's generations and nations. By faith Christians have the luxury of the promises of God; and by faith we are prepared to wait for the promises yet to come. The world, unknowingly, awaits the faith of believers to provide the hope that they have yet to experience. It is through our faith as Christians that the world may know that God loves them and has not forgotten them.

GOD'S STORY

God's discipline for many believers is seldom thought about. Sometimes we find ourselves or others complaining about our circumstances. We complain without recognizing that the circumstances we find ourselves in are likely the consequences of our own sin and are also a part of God's loving and gracious discipline. For example, are you having a trying time financially? Perhaps it is due to your desire to want and therefore overspend on other things? This self-centeredness can provide the establishment of consistent sin in a believer's life, encountering even greater difficult circumstances and sin.

Correction and discipline are not to be confused with cold-hearted punishment. God's discipline of us is a response of God's love for us. God desires for each of us to be holy. God, therefore, will use difficult trials and various dilemmas to bring us back to Him in genuine repentance. Resulting from this discipline is a deeper faith, a renewed relationship with God and a transformed life. Another result is terminating the grip of sin. God's correction functions for our own wellness and wholeness and so that God might be glorified with our transformed and transforming lives. God desires that we reveal lives of holiness and that our lives reflect the new nature that God has given us.

OUR STORY

To be holy is to be like Jesus. A life that reflects the life of Jesus reflects the glory of God. Through the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, within us, there emerges a passion to renounce the sin in our lives and focus on Jesus. Through a faithfulness to practice spiritual disciplines such as prayer, service, simplicity, solitude, fellowship, witness, and private and public worship, we are formed or shaped to become more in line with the patterns in the life of Jesus.

Faith and endurance permit believers to follow the way of peace and holiness. As Christians follow their calling continually, thoroughly, and with desire a greater sense of peace and holiness emerges. Peace with humans, of all nationalities and ethnicities, will be constructive in our own pursuit of holiness as persons and as faith communities. Peace and holiness go together. As you might expect, there cannot be peace exclusive of holiness.

Allowing sin to prevail in our lives can bring a heart of darkness and spiritual death. This failure interrupts the whole body from the pursuit of wholeness God desires. When we move away from Jesus we live out of the flesh. God desires that we no longer live out of flesh but live out of our newly reshaped heart. There are typically five categories in which we need to strive to be holy people. These five categories are:

- God—How are we honoring God with our life?
- Self—How are we respecting self with our intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual life?
- Church—How are we finding ways to serve together as a church?
- Family—How are we finding ways to grow toward Christ as a family?
- Society—How are we finding ways to live holy for the sake of the world?

OTHERS' STORY

In Hebrews 13, the writer of Hebrews provides some final thoughts for his readers. Here are some of the writer's exhortations:

- Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters
- Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers
- Remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison
- Remember those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering
- Honor marriage and keep it pure
- Keep your lives free from the love of money
- Be content with what you have
- Remember your leaders
- Remember Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever
- Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings
- Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise
- Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased
- Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority

The book of Hebrews is designed to equip us with everything we need to participate with God in God's mission. Through the guidance of the Spirit, and through the eternal covenant brought by Christ's blood, we are given the admonition to bring glory to God in all we do. Above is a great list—a place to start. What would the world think of the church if we practiced just the short list of exhortations in chapter 13 of Hebrews?

THE WORLD'S STORY

In light of Hebrews 13:15, let's finish this lesson by reflecting on this prayer of praise:

Blessed are you, oh, God:
Blessed are you for ever and ever.
Holy is your name, oh, God:
Blessed are you for ever and ever.
Great is your mercy and compassion for all of humanity:
Blessed are you for ever and ever.
Help us to let our light shine before others
And lead them to the way of salvation and justice.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
We praise you and give each of you all of the glory:
We thank you for calling us, the church, to be your holy people.
Help us to let our light shine before others
And lead them to the way of salvation and justice.

Endure in our hearts,
And escort us in our love and service.
Help us to let our light shine before others
And lead them to the way of salvation and justice.

Cleanse our hearts and our lives
With your holy Word
And make our prayer be beautiful to you.
Help us to let our light shine before others
And lead them to the way of salvation and justice.

Let us give glory to the Father
Through the Son
In the Holy Spirit,
For God has made us His people, His Church,
And calls us to sing His praises.
Help us to let our light shine before others
And lead them to the way of salvation and justice.

Father of Jesus,
We praise you and give you glory
For the wonderful things you do for us;
For life and health,
for friends and family,
for this splendid day.
Help us to let our light shine before others
And lead them to the way of salvation and justice.