

RUNNING FAITH

Hebrews 11: Joseph & Moses

Introduction

Good morning family, my name is Benny McGrath. We're gonna jump right into it this morning...

Please find Hebrews chapter 1. — And I'm going to need TWO VOLUNTEERS to read it for me.

Hebrews is a sermon-letter. Probably passed around among the Hebrew (Jewish) Christians living throughout the Roman empire during a time when declaring faith in Jesus could get your stuff confiscated, maybe imprisoned or forced into slavery, and possibly even public execution.

A RISKY time to be a Christian and especially not a fun time to be a Hebrew Christian. Because if you were Hebrew, then you were probably meeting in the synagogue with the other Jews, but while some of the Jews trusted that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, other Jews didn't and they weren't happy about the way Jesus affecting things. So danger on the outside AND danger on the inside.

And the author of this letter is encouraging and reminding these faithful Hebrews about why they put their faith in Jesus.

Read Hebrews 11:1

Volunteers, you read Hebrews 1:1-12. You've got your parts here. I'm going to have to leave you all for a minute while I go change into something a little more preachy.

[SLIDE]

Hebrews 1:1-2 BETA. Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe.

Hebrews 1:3- ALPHA The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.

* **Hebrews 1:4-5 BETA** This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names. For God never said to any angel what he said to Jesus: "You are my Son. Today I have become your Father.

Hebrews 1:6 ALPHA God also said, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son." And when he brought his supreme Son into the world, God said, "Let all of God's angels worship him."

Hebrews 1:7 BETA Regarding the angels, he says, "He sends his angels like the winds, his servants like flames of fire."

Hebrews 1: 8-9 ALPHA But to the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever. You rule with a scepter of justice. You love justice and hate evil. Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else."

Hebrews 1:10-12 BETA He also says to the Son, "In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundation of the earth and made the heavens with your hands. They will perish, but you remain forever. They will wear out like old clothing. You will fold them up like a cloak and discard them like old clothing. But you are always the same; you will live forever."

Do you believe it?

Campbell River, Jesus is not just a pretty good guy, or a great teacher, or a powerful prophet, or some heavenly thing. He is the one and only living God. Jesus created the universe. He is the sovereign King of kings and and host of heaven!

And THEN ... letting go of the riches and comfort of his heavenly throne, he became like us, human. So that he could take all the bad stuff humanity deserves on himself so receiving in his own body the punishment we for the wrong we have done. — And he cleared the way for failed humanity to live a true and full life with the inheritance that he deserves. When we follow his way, he actually makes us co-heirs of his kingdom!

Campbell River, do you believe that Jesus truly is God most high? That his sacrifice covers all of your sin? That King Jesus will reign forever?

— Do you believe that?

A very short background on the Hebrews.

It's easy enough for us to nod our heads and say amen here in Campbell River. It helps that we're not in any danger of being captured and fed to lions in the Colosseum.

But for the people who this passage was first intended for, declaring Jesus as God and saviour I could get you some pretty nasty looks and disgruntled remarks from across the pews. Right inside the synagogue where they met.

The Hebrews were under serious social pressure to compromise on their beliefs. We all compromise things to get along with the people around us. But there are some things that are uncompromisable. And the author is trying to help them establish what those uncompromisable are.

Over the last couple of weeks we've focused on the characters mentioned in Hebrews 11 where the author refers to some of Israel's key historical figure to show how they're ancient faith is parallel with faith of the believers in his audience.

Their faith in Jesus is not a contemporary fad they bought into, or a theological nuance they'd be better off not thinking about.

From the beginning, generation after generation, God's faithful people have trusted that God would come and graciously deliver them to his promised kingdom.

And as we just read in Hebrews 1, everything there is to know, love, and trust about God is fully embodied for us in his son, JESUS.

[SLIDE]

*All of God's promises to humanity
rests on the shoulders of God's son, Jesus*

If that truth was so important that the Hebrews suffered so much to hold on to it...

— **It certainly matters for us today!** - We don't want to miss it.

Let's pray.

A curious contrast between Joseph & Moses.

[SLIDE]

When I started planning this sermon I was suppose to speak about Joseph on one Sunday, and then about Moses on another Sunday. That's what we planned to do. That's what I was suppose to do. But I was planning both at the same time and saw that Joseph and Moses have this really interesting relationship. Ie...

Their lives are so radically opposite from each other, it forced me to ask the question "how could these guys possibly end up on the same list."

So I'm going to fast-foward through some of the big moments and plot them out for you so that you can see what I'm talkin about ...

JOSEPH [SLIDE]

The family that he is born into receives a wonderful world changing promised from God. - *Great place to be born.*

Then at age 17 God gives him a vision of greatness in his futures. You would think is a great thing but...

— His mom dies and his 10 older hate him, because of the vision of greatness so they trap him in a pit, sell him to Egyptian slave traders and tell his family he's dead. - *Thanks fam.*

In Egypt he earns a good reputation loving God and serving others. (Great story)

Falsely accused of rape, he is forgotten in prison, but even there he loves God and serves others in jail.

He comes to Pharaohs notice and gets promoted to prime minister of the most powerful empire in the world at that time.

He reunites with his family, ensures their future success and dies in luxury.

Israel sell themselves into egyptian slavery, under a new oppressive Pharaoh.

MOSES [SLIDE]

Born into absolute destitution. *Which is usually terrible.*

But he escapes genocide, is adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and enjoys a luxurious childhood.

— Raised/trained in the world's most powerful house.

Fails an attempts to start a revolution for his people and flees Egypt as a fugitive.

Then God uses him in some of the most spectacular bible wonders.

Tormented by unfaithful Israel for 40 years before.

After 40 years of baby-sitting a nation in the wilderness, he dies just before entering the promised land.

Then God brings Israel into the promise land under Joshua's lead..

The curious inclusion of the Heroic AND Humiliated believers.

Joseph and Moses have almost opposite stories.

If this was a list of underdogs who trusted God and came out on top then Joseph's definitely on it.

But why Moses?

If it was a list of people who sacrificed left riches behind to bury themselves in holy ministry, Moses definitely gets in. But why Joseph?

And to add to the variety the author also mentions this generic group of other faithful believers in **Hebrews 11:33-35* who...

[SLIDE] "...overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. Women received their loved ones back again from death."

Talk to me church, who here longs for a faith that rules your household, workplace and life with justice?

Who here wants faith to receive God's promises?

Who wants to shut the mouth of lions, and quench the flames of the enemy?

Who wants to escape the sword and turn weakness to strength?

Who wants to see the lost people they pray for walking in the newness of life?

But then the author includes yet another completely different group in *Hebrews 11:35b-37*.

[SLIDE] "...But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated."

What happened there? Why are these guys on the list. That doesn't sound like encouragement! What do these humiliated believers have anything to do with Joseph, Moses and the other heroes of *Hebrews 11*.

If we compare Joseph, Moses, the heroes and the humiliated people's quality of life on the *Hebrews 11* list in this graph.

[SLIDE]

It's just a mess.

Understated mentions...

What does Joseph, and Moses, the heroes and humiliated people of God have in common that got them a spot on the list of faithful people? — Well, you might have got it right away like my wife. But it probably took me about 2 weeks.

JOSEPH

We could have said about Joseph "He had paid his dues. Faithful in his darkest hours, and look at how God paid him out in the end; happy and healthy, rich and surrounded by family.

— But that's not the part of Joseph's life that we hear about in **Hebrews 11:22*. What does it say? ...

[SLIDE] "It was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, said confidently that the people of Israel would leave Egypt. He even commanded them to take his bones with them when they left."

That's it? That's what we need to know about Joseph's faith?

The only thing the author points out about Joseph's faith is that the promise of God's kingdom superseded anything he could bring with him into that city;

— Joseph didn't even seem to mind that he was gonna die before getting there...

"Alright guys, here's what we're gonna do. God's making the way for us into his promised city. Now, I'm probably gonna die in a minute. No big deal. God promised it. We're doing it. Just put my bones in a box and it'll be grand!"

MOSES

Moses is potentially the highest esteemed character in the bible 2nd to God himself. He summons plagues. Parts the sea. Fed Israel a nation with miracle food for 40 years.

— He he did that until he was 120 years old!

That's crazy! Tell us more about that guy! — Nope. That's not the part of Moses' life that we hear about in *Hebrews 11:25-27*.

[SLIDE] . *“He chose to share the oppression of God’s people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible.”*

That’s what we need to know about Moses?

The guy that wrote the first 5 books of the bible...

I could think of some things I’d like to know about Moses...

— Was an early morning devotional guy, or just, whenever?

— Did he say no to a shot of tequila at his bachelor party?

— — Are tattoos strictly forbidden or not?

— — — How many history maker conferences did he have to attend before he could actually make history?

Nope. When our faith is being tested and we need to know what to trust we ought to remember about Moses, who grew up in a house where he was regarded by the general public as demigod material, is that he LEFT IT ALL to be one of the people who hope in God’s promise.

Why is the author of Hebrews doing this? Why is he leaving out these amazing people’s achievements, and zooming in on **what they threw away?**

[Running.]

Let’s find out in Hebrews 12:1b-2a

[SLIDE] . *“...let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith...”*

[SLIDE] .

Running. Eyes fixed. They let no weight

Keep them from crossing God’s city gate. (x2)

Admittedly the rhyme isn’t great. But I want you to picture it.

The author of Hebrews isn’t pointing out the great things Joseph and Moses achieved, because that does not tell us who or what their faith was in, or why

Right now the Hebrews are doubting if God’s promise is really *good news for them* when all around them things seems to be crashing down.

Moses, Joseph, the heros and the humiliated people in Hebrews 11 stayed focused on the hope of God’s promise...

— In poverty and abundance

— In peace and conflict

— In confidence and weakness...

I’m not telling you run...

I gotta be honest. I don’t think my impulse would be to tell you to run. If I was the author of Hebrews and you were the Hebrew people struggling with doubt and worried that you were not getting what you bargained for... I don’t think running is the angle I would choose.

After all Jesus says in * Matthew 11:28-29

. [SLIDE] .

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

That sounds really nice! There might have been a number of Hebrews who heard Jesus say that in person.

But that passage in Matthew says nothing about running or a race. That verse is all about the weight we carry. Our forward movement is assumed.

. [SLIDE] .

Just like in Hebrews 12:1,

— **The word translated here as race is the greek word “agona”.** it’s a synonym for struggle. (It’s where we get the word agony from.)

— The author is using wordplay. He’s using a running metaphor to encapsulate our entire life experience.

My wife really appreciated that bit. I like to run. She doesn’t like to run. She like to sleep. But she’s also a working mom of 4 little kids, so she understands what it is to struggle and agonize over the race at hand.

The implication is,

if we exist in this world WE ARE RUNNING.

We can’t stop. We can choose what we carry, and what we run toward. But we don’t get to chose the speed, or the terrain.

And whether you’re a believer or not, we’re all prone to add more weight and lose sight of where we are going.

You’ve probably even seen well meaning Christians get weighed down, exhausted by a long list of Christian things to do.

— Or people who seem to run well, but get lost along the way.

It’s hard for me to stand up here and tell people with their heavy-loads, and blurry eyes, to run.

(Especially cos I’m one of them.)

That’s why I’m holding this God-inspired book. I need to hear this. You need it to.

. [SLIDE] .

“...let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith...”

. [SLIDE] .

Running. Eyes fixed.

They let no weight keep them

from crossing God’s city gate. (x2)

Alright with that said, I’m going to reveal the title that I wanted to give this sermon, but it was too long for Callista’s branding standards.

3 practical tips for running when you actually feel like hiding.

[SLIDE]

One: Look up while you run. Like Jesus.

Two: Don't weight for things to get easier

Three: God's Promise is [like] a city.

ONE:

Look up. Like Jesus.

Up to now I've been reading half of * Hebrews 12 verse 1 and half of verse 2. Now I'm finally going to read all of 1 and 2.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith.

That crowd of witnesses is the people the author has just listed off in Hebrews 11. And he saying, "Since we know we're not alone in our faith, but in the good company of people who have faithfully trusted God to the end...

Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

Joseph and Moses really are great examples of faith. But if we fix our eyes on them, if we hold their actions up as the goal putting our faith in becoming just like them, we will **surely** fail.

They were just people, trusting in the Promise of holy and loving God.

There is nothing that they carried to add to the Promise of God. They didn't have what it takes to fulfill God's promise. But they fixed their eyes on the one who did.

Jesus. The Son of God, who came to be a man,

The full radiance of God on earth.

— Isaiah 50:7 says He set his face like flint to love God and serve people. And on the cross, he stripped himself of everything to fulfill his promise,

JESUS CONQUERED DEATH! He finished what the Heroes of Hebrews 11 couldn't do.

— And having fulfilled our debt of sin, and having shared his holy inheritance with those who will accept it.

— — Jesus cleared the passage for our salvation.

Jesus didn't just finish the job. He is the fulfillment of God's promise. His life has become the path that we run along toward our future hope. And his sacrifice is the gate that opens up to us as we approach the day of our full redemption.

— And according to John 14:2, at this very moment he is preparing your place in his city. (*John 14:2 In my father's house there are many rooms...)

And he has! Jesus didn't just run beyond the constraints of the grave. He hasn't just faithfully proven the promise of God. As he sit on the throne of heaven, he has FULFILLED the promise of God! And he has become the path the we stand on as we run toward it. His sacrificial love IS

THE GATE that opens up to us as we approach the day of our full redemption into the Kingdom of God! And according to John 14:2, at this very moment he is preparing your place in his city. (*John 14:2 In my father's house there are many rooms...)

So...

Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

Running. Eyes fixed.

**WE let no weight keep US
from crossing God's city gate. (x2)**

TWO:

Don't weight for things to get easier.

Campbell River Baptist Church, what weights are you holding onto?

There's two kinds of weights talked about this passage:

- 1) The weight of sin that so easily entangles
- 2) Other weight.

CRBC, I know you're eyes are fixed on Jesus. I know you run toward him.

But are you holding sin that is weighing you down as you go?

Drop the secret email address you use for your double life.

Drop the gossip you use to control how people feel toward others.

Drop the lies you tell to get a bit extra for yourself.

Drop the bags of money you're using to cushion the last few moments you have have left in this life before you arrive on the doorstep of eternity.

God is warning you TODAY. Your sin is weeds choking out your faith. — That's one kind of weight.

Hebrews 12:1 tell us to strip every weight. Especially sin — That means, not just sin.

There's other weight in your life pulling you to the left and right. **It's not sin. Drop it!**

It's not sin. But it's really not helping you run.

— The Holy Spirit is calling you to **drop it.**

Let that sink in for a minute. — Every weight.

Is there any weight that slows you down as you run toward Jesus. - Not just sin. REPEAT

If you didn't already pick up the illustration. The author is giving us a sports reference. I'm not much of a sports reference guy. But I think this one is hilarious.

The picture is of an ancient greek gym class. And if you've ever seen a picture of the ancient greeks at the gym class, you will know, they stripped "every" encumbrance. Not just the big heavy helmets and swords...

They got naked. 🙄

The image being created for us is exaggerated to make the point. You're carrying a lot more weight than you thought you were! I bet you didn't even think about how much your clothes weigh.

Now this is Vancouver Island, so I'm gonna guess that there's at least 5 closet-hippies in this room that just got very excited at the suggestion that the bible says we should walk around naked. That's 100%

NOT what this passage is saying.

But family, God's word is making this illustration because God wants us to take a much closer look at the weight we are holding on to.

That's for us. God's asking us to drop that weight for our sake. It's to get us closer to his promise. He's already done his part. The joy that awaits us, is secured. Dropping the weight is to bring us closer to it.

Specifically, if you think you're making things easier for God by fulfilling some of his promise for him.

You have a too small view of God's promise.

Or a too big view of how much like a god you are.

Whatever project you're carrying to try and squeeze the promises out of God the promises or beat him to it,

— Drop them...

You think you're strong enough to carry the extra weight now. But they'll crush when your weak. You're trying so hard to control your spouse and children to straighten out and give you satisfaction... that only God can... **Drop it.**

You're taking more and more time for yourself in front of a screen to "finally get some peace" that for some reason you can't seem to find in Jesus. ... **Lay it aside.**

You're so run-down from the myriad volunteer task forces you're on you begin to despise the people God intends you to spend eternity with because they don't acknowledge the merit you've earned... **Strip it away.**

Heaven is a long way away, God's not giving you what you want now, so you bury yourself in debt.. **Get rid of it.**

"But God, if I don't keep up with what my friends are saying online I could miss out on a really funny video that everyone else has seen...

I love you. I want to follow you. I'll do anything to be closer to you... But. Look, there's another funny video, Lord... It makes me happy, don't you want me to be happy... ?

How many Christians tolerate a joyless kind of faith, disillusioned in their relationship with Jesus because of the **morally neutral** weight they lug around with them on the way to a place where Jesus freely and abundantly provides their every need and desire?

[SLIDE]

Running. Eyes fixed.

They let no weight keep them

from crossing God's city gate. (x2)

A story about the weight I carry.

