

Dr. David A. deSilva, Hebrews, Session 10A, Hebrews 11:1-12:3: Faith in Action (Part 1)

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Right. So good. Because we're going deep today into what it actually means to, like, live out your faith.

Not just, you know, saying you believe something, but how that belief changes what you do. Yeah. Especially when things get tough.

Exactly. When it feels like everyone's telling you to do one thing, but your faith is saying, nope, go this other way. Yeah.

We're going to be looking at that faith in action idea. Okay. Through a lecture by Dr. David A. deSilva.

Okay. He dives into the book of Hebrews, specifically chapters 11 and 12. Gotcha.

Where you get this, almost like a hall of famer. Oh, interesting. Of people who lived out their faith in some pretty incredible ways.

Okay. So like the ultimate example. And you know, the cool part? What's that? Their stories aren't just ancient history.

Right. They're like blueprints for how we can live today. Blueprints.

I like that. Yeah. Okay.

So where does deSilva even start with all of this? Well, he starts by defining faith, which you might've heard before. Substance of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen. Yeah, I've heard that.

But there's this whole other layer to the word they use for substance in the original Greek. Okay. Hypostasis.

Hypostasis. Which can also mean a title deed, like a guarantee. Wait, hold on.

A title deed? Yeah. So it's like, faith is more than just this feeling. It's like having this document that says, this is mine.

I'm guaranteed to get it. Yes. I love how you put that.

You see, deSilva's saying this understanding of faith was especially important for the original audience of Hebrews. Okay. These were early Christians who were facing persecution, loss, even being pushed out of their communities for their beliefs.

Yeah, it was rough back then. They needed that rock-solid assurance that what they were going through wasn't for nothing. That makes sense.

They had to know those sacrifices actually meant something. But some of these stories in Hebrews are pretty intense. Like sacrificing your son.

Or facing giants. I mean, how can we even relate to that in today's world? That's a great question. And that's where these specific examples from Hebrews 11 come in.

The author takes us way back, before the flood, to folks like Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Talk about living by faith when the world had never seen anything like it. Right.

So like, starting from scratch. Exactly. Let's start with Abel then.

The author of Hebrews says he offered a greater sacrifice than Cain. What's that all about? Well, the Bible doesn't give us all the details about why. But a lot of Jewish tradition at the time connected the quality of the sacrifice to the character of the person giving it.

So Abel's actions, his offering, reflected his faith. And his right relationship with God. It reminds us that true faith shows up in what we do, not just what we say.

So even way back then, it wasn't just about believing. It was about acting on that belief. Yeah.

And then you got Enoch. According to Genesis, he just walked with God. And he was not.

For God took him. Ooh. That's a mysterious one.

It is. The author of Hebrews links Enoch's sudden, poof, gone, being taken to heaven to a life focused on pleasing God. And that idea of pleasing God is going to pop up again and again in Hebrews.

Interesting. So it's less about fitting in with everyone else. Right.

And more about aligning your life with what God wants. But wouldn't that have been really tough back then? It definitely could. Yeah.

And that brings us to Noah. Okay, Noah. This guy was warned about events not yet seen and told to build an ark when it had never even rained.

Oh, wow. Talk about needing serious trust. I know, right? Can you imagine trying to explain that to your neighbors? I do.

Oh, yeah. I'm building this huge boat. You know, just in case it starts raining for 40 days and nights, you should probably build one too.

Exactly. They'd think he was crazy. It would seem totally nuts to everyone around him.

But Noah's story highlights that forward-looking part of faith. It's about trusting in God's promises, even when everything around you seems to contradict them. Just like Noah prepared for a future he couldn't see, we're called to act on what we believe, even when others don't get it.

Right. So we've got these pre-flood heroes setting the stage. But now we're getting to the big names, like Abraham.

This guy left his home, his comfort, everything. Just based on God's promise of a new land. That's some serious trust.

It is mind-blowing, isn't it? And deSilva brings up this fascinating parallel between Abraham and those early Christians. They too had to leave behind their old lives, embrace this new way of living, which often meant being isolated socially and culturally. It's tough to be the odd one out.

So Abraham's story becomes this powerful example of staying the course, even when you feel like you lose your place in the world because of your faith. Wow. To just leave everything behind like that.

What do you think was going through Abraham's head? It's hard to imagine. But the author of Hebrews emphasizes that Abraham was looking ahead to a better heavenly homeland. He wasn't focused on building his kingdom here on earth.

He had his sights on something much greater. It's like he knew this world wasn't all there is. Exactly.

And it's interesting, even after he reached Canaan, the promised land, Abraham kept living in tents. He never really settled down. It's like he was saying, this isn't my home.

I'm just passing through. And that's a big message for us today, isn't it? Are we so busy building our own little kingdoms here, our careers, our possessions, that we forget about our eternal home? It's a good question to ask ourselves. It's easy to get caught up in what's right in front of us.

Absolutely. But then there's that ultimate test of Abraham's faith. The binding of Isaac.

It's such a hard story. It is. It's one of the toughest in the Bible.

But deSilva points out that the author of Hebrews focuses on Abraham's total confidence that God would raise Isaac from the dead if needed. It wasn't blind obedience. It was this unshakeable trust that God would keep his promises, even in the most extreme situations.

So even when faced with the unthinkable, Abraham's faith didn't budge. It didn't. And that brings us to another giant of faith, Moses.

Oh, he knows this. This was a guy who had it all, seemingly power, wealth, status. He was at the top.

But he chose to walk away from all of it. Seriously. To stand with the enslaved Israelites.

Why would he do that? Give up everything he had? Well, the author of Hebrews is very intentional about picking this example for his audience. Remember, these early Christians, they were facing persecution and rejection. Right.

Yeah. So Moses's choice becomes this powerful model of putting your loyalty to God above your own comfort and acceptance in the world. It's like you're saying my true identity isn't in my things or my status.

It's in my relationship with God. You got it. And that leads us right into the Exodus itself.

Okay. Which is like faith in action on a massive scale. Right.

The Passover, the Red Sea Crossing, the fall of Jericho. These are all huge displays of trust in God's power and deliverance. Okay.

So let's talk about Passover for a second. What's so important about that event? You know what I find so interesting about the Passover is the Israelites were celebrating their freedom before it even happened. Really? Yeah.

Like talk about anticipatory faith. Yeah. Like imagine celebrating your freedom when you're not even free yet.

That's next-level confidence. I know. Right.

Like they were saying, God's got this. Let's have a party. Exactly.

And it shows us something important about faith. It's not just passive waiting. It's actively anticipating and confidently celebrating what God's going to do.

Wow. I never thought of it that way. That really changes how I see the whole thing.

But hold on. Didn't they still have to walk through the Red Sea and conquer Jericho? Where does that fit in? Well, those events show us that faith isn't a one-time deal. It's about continuing to trust God even when new challenges pop up.

Okay. So the Red Sea, for example. Yeah.

They had to step out in faith, literally, before they saw how it would all work out. Right. Okay.

That makes sense. What about Jericho, though? That wasn't exactly a walk in the park, was it? No. Not at all.

So how does that show faith? Well, the fall of Jericho demonstrates the power of obedience, even when the instructions seem, well, kind of strange. Marching around a city, blowing trumpets. Yeah.

It does sound more like a parade than a battle plan. Exactly. But it worked, which I guess is the point.

It reminds me of another interesting person from that time. Rahab, the prostitute who helped those Israelite spies. Oh, yeah.

Rahab. Why would she risk her life to help them? Well, her story is incredible because it shows that true faith can come from, well, unexpected places. Okay.

Rahab recognized the power of God and chose to be on his side, even though it meant going against her own people. So it wasn't about where she came from or her social status. Exactly.

It was about recognizing the truth and responding to it. And that message, that's still relevant today, isn't it? Absolutely. It is.

But, you know, we've talked about all these amazing examples of faith in action, but there's one thing deSilva points out that ties it all together. Oh, what's that? Confession. Confession.

What do you mean? Well, he emphasizes how the author of Hebrews mentions over and over the patriarchs confessing that they were strangers and aliens here on earth. Okay. Like they never saw this world as their true home.

Their eyes were fixed on something bigger, something eternal. So it's not just about saying you believe something; it's about actually living like it's true. Exactly.

Their willingness to live as sojourners, even when it meant hardship and rejection, that was how their faith showed up in their lives. They were literally walking the walk. Wow.

Okay. So we've seen these incredible stories of faith in action from way back when. Yeah.

But what does all this mean for us today? We're not building arcs or facing giants. So how can we live out this kind of radical faith in our modern world? That's the big question, isn't it? It is. And I think deSilva gives us some really good insights.

First, we've got to remember that true faith is always looking ahead. Okay. It's not just about believing something.

Right. It's about acting on that belief, even when you don't see the results right away. Kind of like planting a seed and trusting it'll grow, even though you can't see what's happening underground.

Yeah, that's a great analogy. It's about holding on to that title deed of God's promises, that hypostasis we were talking about, trusting that he will make happen what he's promised, even if it seems impossible right now. So having that deep-down belief that what God said will happen, even if we can't see it yet.

Yeah. But what about everyday life? How do we actually put this into practice? Well, it could look like speaking up for what's right, even when it's not popular, or showing compassion and generosity to people who need it, even when it's inconvenient, or maybe choosing to be honest in our work, even when it means we lose out financially. It's about making choices, big or small, that reflect what we truly believe.

So it's about letting our faith guide our actions, decisions, relationships, the whole thing. Exactly. It's about living like citizens of heaven while we're still here on earth.

I like that. It's about letting our faith be the compass that guides us, the foundation that holds us up, and the hope that keeps us moving forward. And you know, I love that picture the author of Hebrews paints of the cloud of witnesses.

It's like, we're surrounded by all these people who have gone before us, who lived out their faith in amazing ways, and they're cheering us on. It is a powerful thought. But throughout Hebrews 11, there's this emphasis on the invisibility of faith.

It's about trusting in things not seen, hoping for things yet to come. So it's not seeing is believing. It's believing even when you can't see.

Exactly. It's having that deep inner conviction that what God has promised, he will fulfill. It's about living by faith, not by sight.

Which brings us back to that idea of the title deed. We may not be able to see our inheritance yet, but we can hold onto that assurance, that guarantee that it's ours. And that assurance, that unshakable faith, it's what gives us the power to live boldly, to persevere, to make a real difference in the world.

That's amazing to think about: even though we can't physically see those things, faith gives us the reality of them right now. But it makes me wonder: faith is all about those things not seen. How do we actually know it's real? What proof do we have in our own lives? That is such a good question to think about.

The author of Hebrews uses these biblical figures as proof that faith is real and has power. Yeah. But for us today, what proof do we see in our own lives or what about in the world around us? That's a tough one.

I've been thinking about those times when I took a step of faith, even when I felt scared or unsure, and somehow things worked out. Those moments become these little pieces of evidence, building a case for the reality of faith. I love that.

It's like each step of faith, each time we choose to trust God, even when it doesn't make sense, it becomes like another brick in the foundation of our belief. Yeah. And it's not just our own experiences, right? I think about the people I know who just keep going, keep loving, keep serving, even when things are tough.

They're like walking examples of what faith can do. Absolutely. Those quiet heroes who keep showing up, keep believing.

Even when the world throws its worst at them, their lives are a testament to the power of faith to sustain us and to transform us. Totally. It's like they're holding up a mirror reflecting that same unshakable face we see in those heroes from Hebrews.

Yeah. And it makes me think, what if we all tried to be that kind of reflection for others? What if we let our faith shine through even in the middle of darkness or difficulty? That's beautiful. Because at the end of the day, it's not about us, is it? It's about reflecting God's faithfulness, his unwavering commitment to his people.

Our faith is a response to his love, his grace, his relentless pursuit of us. Yeah. And maybe that's the most convincing proof of all, right? The fact that even when we mess up, even when we doubt, God's love never fails.

It's a love that pursues us, that redeems us and empowers us to live lives that are way beyond anything we could imagine on our own. So as we wrap up today, I want to encourage you to keep your eyes open for those proofs of faith. Those little glimmers of hope, those acts of courage and kindness that remind us that faith isn't just an idea; it's a living, breathing reality.

It's something that can change not only our own lives, but also the world around us. Absolutely. And remember, you're not alone on this journey.

You're surrounded by this incredible cloud of witnesses, those who have gone before us and those who are walking alongside us. Yeah. All cheering you on, encouraging you to keep taking those steps of faith, to keep trusting, to keep living out your belief in bold and beautiful ways.