

Hebrews 11:1-3

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Date: 27 October 2019

Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] Please join me in your copy of God's Word in Hebrews chapter 11.!

In our study last Lord's Day, the author of this letter to the war-weary Hebrew believers gathered in a home on the outskirts of Rome, encouraged them by reminding them of their past faithfulness in suffering.

This church had suffered. We know this both historically and we know it from this text itself. They had endured a hard struggle with sufferings.

And I fear in our study of the book of Hebrews that it may become distant for some people. That it's so far removed from your experience that you don't really know exactly how it might speak to you. And in some sense it doesn't. Many of us don't pursue Christ the way we ought to and therefore don't experience the suffering of Christ.

[1:28] We've not really wrapped our minds around the fact that the way of Jesus is the way of suffering. That a student is not greater than his teacher. That we are meant to be a people who are filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.

That we would suffer well in this world to show people that we have a hope that is beyond this world. But I think all of us who are following Jesus will experience discomfort in this place. You know some of you have family that are strongly against your Christian faith. Or your devotion to the Bible.

Some of us are seen as so weird by other people who profess to follow Christ. Because we actually take his commands seriously. We don't live however we want as the world lives.

But we live the way we believe God would have us to live. And we do experience this push back and this discomfort. So we can find ourselves in this text.

[2:32] And I believe in coming years we're going to find ourselves more and more in this text. We're going to relate in higher order to these early Christians.

So I hope you won't set aside the text. And believe that it doesn't have anything to say for you today. And so this author is writing.

Last week we looked at. To encourage them to press on in their faith. And he does so by reminding them of the way they had been faithful in the past.

He says beginning in verse 32 of chapter 10. Recall the former days when after you were enlightened. You endured a hard struggle with suffering. Sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction.

And sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison. And you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property. Since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

[3:35] Therefore do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance. So that when you have done the will of God. You may receive what is promised.

He's saying in overly simple words of my own. Press on. Keep at it. Prove yourself to have placed faith in Christ by remaining faithful.

And then he cites Habakkuk chapter 2 verses 3 and 4. In verses 37 and 38 of Hebrews chapter 10. He says. Yet a little while. And the coming one will come and will not delay.

But my righteous one shall live by faith. And if he shrinks back. My soul has no pleasure in him. He speaks of the coming return of Christ.

That one day future hope for those who are in Christ. And that place of absolute dread for those who are not. And then he declares of them in verse 39.

[4:44] But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed. But of those who have faith and preserve their souls. So pastoral he says to them.

But we are not those. Right? We are those who preserve their souls by faith. And it is in this context. That he speaks.

The words and the beginning of Hebrews chapter 11. Right? The need for them and for us. To persevere by faith amidst the cruelty of this world.

That he begins the glorious chapter 11. Where he lays out example after example after example. Of people who have gone before with persevering faith.

He would have them and us unite with the words written in James chapter 1 verse 2 and 3. Where James writes, Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

[5:46] For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. It produces endurance. That we would be faithful to the end.

And so he begins this chapter about faith. And all of these examples of faith by defining what he means by faith.

So join me in Hebrews chapter 11 verses 1 through 3. Beloved, this is God's word to us written for his glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for. Remember, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation.

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God. So that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. If you like to take notes or just like to get some structure in your head.

[6:54] The outline, simple outline for this morning is number one, faith's definition. Number two, faith's commendation. Because I couldn't think of a better word. And number three, faith's foundation.

So faith's definition, commendation, and foundation. First, faith's definition found in verse 1. Now I think it's important to say that this is not an exhaustive definition.

There is much that can be said concerning the matter of faith and faithfulness. The Bible has a lot to say about this.

And I think we can be over-reductionary if we just say this is the full and final definition on what faith is. But it is certainly meant to be a definition, maybe a description for this context.

What is he talking about when he uses the word faith again and again and again throughout the rest of the chapter? By faith, by faith, by faith.

[7:58] You'll see it over and over and over again. Think of this definition as a description of faith that perseveres to the end.

And he says to us that faith is sure. It is confident. He says it's the assurance of things hoped for. Now the word here translated assurance in the ESV translation I think most of us have. You may have another. You may use a different word. It's the Greek word hypostasis.

Which is a really tricky word to translate into a single English word. And all of our very Bible translators do really difficult work to make an ancient language readable in the English.

And so sometimes they're stuck having to pick a word to describe a word that has much deeper meaning than any single English word can accomplish.

[9:04] So some other possibilities you may see in your translation could be substance or foundation or the argument could be made guarantee.

Now I like the chosen word assurance. I am not qualified to sit on a Bible translation board. But if I was I think I would have passed my vote here.

It would have been the dumbest vote in the room. But I would have said assurance. I think assurance is a good one in this case. But it isn't entirely adequate. You see the faith being referred to here is not what some would call blind faith.

It's not a drummed up faith. And this is where I think all of these words don't quite expand out enough. It's a confident faith.

It's an immovable faith. It's got a foundation laid underneath it. When I think of this idea of blind faith.

[10:14] Abstracted faith. My mind always goes at this point to the Indiana Jones movie *The Last Crusade*. And the phrase that's in his mind. Rainier Jones is going in seeking to get the grail. The holy grail.

And he's got notes that his father wrote down in his journal. His studies. And he's got these phrases in his mind. Like only the penitent man shall pass. Somehow he survives swinging blades of death. By kneeling and rolling. I don't know how that came out of the clue. But he gets to a spot where there's a chasm. Right? And there's no visible way to get across the chasm. And the phrase that's in his mind from these notes is.

Only in a leap from the lion's head will he prove his worth. And he's standing on a little precipice that looks like a lion. And he says it over and over again.

And he's not sure what to do. And what does he do? A very strange leap of faith. He sticks his foot out and he leans. And there happens to be a bridge in this place.

[11:12] And if you've never seen this movie you should see it. So you understand what I'm talking about. As I try to. You're going what is he doing right now? Yeah. No idea.

Right? He has no clue that there's something that will catch him. And the picture of faith here is this blind kind of faith. Right? From a leap from the lion's head.

He will prove his faithfulness. By jumping into nothingness. Yes. And he's caught by this land bridge. This is not the faith that the writer of Hebrews is describing.

It's a confident assurance. It would be as if Indiana knew for a fact there was a bridge there. Even though he couldn't see it. But he knows that it's there.

It has a foundation underneath it. There's an undergirding. It's not a feeling or a hunch or some type of sentimentality. The faith of my grandparents.

[12:13] Right? I have their faith because they had faith. Right? It has root. Something to place the faith in. And the next phrase builds upon this to help us further understand that it's also, in addition, the conviction of things not seen.

The absolute certainty of something yet to be beheld. The author of Hebrews tells us that this faith, this persevering faith he's talking about, all in this previous chapter and through the next, is convinced.

Absolutely convinced. Unshakably convinced. But in what? But in what? Right? The object of this faith is of great importance.

That we would actually have faith in something that is a foundation, that is immovable, that is solid, matters immensely.

So, what are the things hoped for and not seen? Promises. They're the promises of God.

[13:32] All that God has said would come to pass. They are the promises of God that find their yes in Jesus Christ. This is what we believe in.

This is the immovable, unshakable object of our faith. Not the way we feel about that, but that it is, in fact, true.

Those promises find their yes in Christ. They are sure and worth believing in. So, persevering faith is certitude, confidence in the promises of God.

And this develops out in the rest of the chapter. What are some of those promises? What are some of those things that we hope for? Those things not seen?

There's a couple. First, Christ's return. We hope for, as God's people, we hope for Christ's return.

[14:41] Have you ever, or have you ever known someone who would have liked to have seen the return of Christ delayed? They're either immature in their faith or have no faith at all.

Those who belong to Christ are desperate for His return. We say, come, Lord Jesus. Single men and women, don't wait until after you're married for Christ to return.

We want Him to return now. The glory is far superior. Titus chapter 2, verse 13. We're waiting for our blessed hope.

The appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are hoping, longing for, believing in Christ's return.

And because of that, all the things that come with it. So, secondly, our resurrection bodies. We are hoping for our resurrection bodies.

[15:40] Praise God, the body that now carries my soul, my spiritual being, will not be my body forever. This body is wasting away.

It is failing me at a more rapid pace than I care for. But praise God, I'm going to have a resurrection body. Pain, pain, and death will be no more in my resurrection body.

Living in the trouble of this world, there will be a more glorious reality for us. Peter writes in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 3.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And we know that because Jesus is raised, we will too be raised. We hope for, as God's people, our future glorification.

[16:42] 1 John chapter 3, verse 2 and 3. John writes, Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.

And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. We will be set free from the bondage, that bondage that still tugs at us of sin.

And having been freed from slavery to sin, we still have our body of flesh. And we struggle in that. This week, we of all, Christ followers, struggle to pursue Christ the way we are meant to.

We want to be set free from the body of death. We want that day to come where we will no longer sin, where we will be righteous in Christ and act righteously forever.

So we hope for that future glorification. And lastly, for now, our reign with Christ. Our reign, our ruling with Christ.

[18:02] 2 Timothy chapter 2, part of verse 12. Paul writes, If we endure, we will also reign with Him. In Revelation chapter 22, verse 5, John writes, And night will be no more.

They will need no light of lamp or sun. For the Lord God will be their light. And they will reign forever and ever. So these are some examples of some things that the Christian hopes for.

Those things not seen. That we have confidence in. Persevering faith is certitude in the promises of God.

It is a confidence so unshakable that we will press on through whatever troubles may come to the very end. Those who belong to Christ will persevere to the end.

Hebrews chapter 10, verse 38. Again, according from Habakkuk chapter 2. My righteous one shall live by faith.

[19:14] And we discussed last week how that could also be translated by faithfulness. Right? By persevering to the end.

Right? And this is a glorious work of God on our behalf. Secondly, those faith definitions. Secondly, faith's commendation.

Verse 2. For by it, this faith, people of old received their commendation. Received their commendation. They were approved of.

What they did accorded a good report. Or they received divine approval. Through ways of understanding what commendation means.

They were given a badge of faithfulness. Right? This one I approve of. Right? Because of their faith. The author of Hebrews is setting us up to receive the list of examples that he is about to give.

[20:17] Right? He's repeating again and again and again. Like, these people of old. And the commendation they received because of their faithfulness. Right? And then he'll say in the beginning of chapter 12.

Like, because we have such a great cloud of witnesses, let us press on. Right? Let us prove ourselves faithful like they were faithful. One example that he gives is that of Abraham.

And he doesn't say it here in Hebrews. But Paul says. Oh, excuse me. That's not Paul. I was going to quote from Romans chapter 5. I wrote down and said Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6. Which is what Paul quotes in Romans chapter 5.

Referring to Abraham. And he believed the Lord. And he counted it to him as righteousness. He was commended because of his faith in God's covenant promise.

And I'd like to give you another biblical example that's not found in chapter 11. Because we're going to spend some time thinking of each of those biblical examples in the coming months. Except maybe in the phrase, verse 34, quenched the power of fire.

[21:26] Maybe we could find this example there. Gary read to us earlier from Daniel chapter 3. And I'd like for you to join me there in Daniel chapter 3. We look a bit at this story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

So this is not one of the author of Hebrews' explicit examples.

Although possibly implicit. But it certainly is an example. Right? Of men who had faith in God's goodness and his commands.

Right? They didn't know with certainty what the outcome of their faithfulness would be. They didn't have an unmovable confidence in their deliverance from the furnace.

What they had an unmovable confidence in was that God was God. And that he was good in giving them a command to only follow him. And so they did.

[22:34] And we'll see the outcome of this. So I'm going to read a little bit broader than Gary read previously. I'm beginning in verse 8 of chapter 3. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, has created an altar that's to be worshipped at.

And if people aren't worshipping at it, they're to be thrown into a furnace. Okay? So we pick up in verse 8. Therefore, at that time, certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews.

They declared to king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever. You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music shall fall down and worship the golden image.

And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

These men, O king, pay no attention to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in furious rage, commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought.

[23:40] So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?

Now, if you are ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good.

But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

If this be so, our god whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hands, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.

Faithfulness. Note here. Faithfulness. They're going to pursue their god, regardless of what may come. Verse 19.

[24:47] Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated, and he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the fiery furnace.

Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning, fiery furnace. Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning, fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste.

He declared to his counselors, Do we not cast three men bound into the fire? They answered and said to the king, True, O king. He answered and said, But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning, fiery furnace. He declared, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire.

[26:07] And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads were not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them.

Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who was sent to his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him and set aside the king's command and yielded up their bodies, rather than serve and worship any god except their own god. Therefore I make a decree, any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon. So note the faithfulness, the extreme, immovable faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And God, in his sovereign purpose, decides to save, spare their lives, that he would be glorified in Babylon. The king himself declares some astounding things about him.

[27:22] Blessed be the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So God uses the suffering of his people for his glory.

Faith in God's command and in God's goodness is what we see here and what we're going to see in the coming months throughout chapter 11.

Now, the people of old, they received their commendation, believing in the promises of God that they would someday, somehow, be fulfilled.

But the way that would happen, the exact way that it would happen, was veiled to them. What was concealed to them has now been revealed to us.

We live in an advantaged age. God has revealed himself in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We now know how all of God's promises find their yes.

[28:29] This is a wonderful thing. And because of it, our faith must be placed in Christ. You cannot believe that God will fulfill his promises apart from the person and work of Jesus Christ.

We must plead with modern day Hebrew people, right? That they would place their faith in Christ. If they want any of the promises of the Old Testament to be realized, for them, it must be by faith in Christ.

Now, we're also going to see in the coming months that this is a faith that works. Not that our works are saving, but it is a faith that works.

And we see this to be true of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They don't merely give lip service to their belief in their God, but they're willing to not bow.

This is their activity in that. We so believe in our God that we will not bow to your God, come what may. It's a faith that works.

[29:42] And I hope you're hearing week in and week out here that for us to be followers of Jesus Christ, our lives are going to look different.

We will be changed, right? From one status, lost, enemies, rebels, dead, to a new status, right? Alive.

Alive to God in Christ. Having his spirit, right? Picking up and obeying his commands, not perfectly, right? But in pursuit of this.

And you may not realize it, but we are constantly stating what we're for here, speaking about what we're against. And we must be abundantly clear at this point.

We're going to see it all throughout the next chapter. Here, our church believes what some will call, and they're doing it when they're calling it a heresy, lordship theology.

[30:44] It was a bunch of years ago that a young man at the time, member of our church, was a college student. He's now our accountant. He would be part of our church if he didn't live far away.

He came to me and he said, my father accused you of being a heretic. I went, oh, really? And he said, yeah. He said, you believe in lordship theology.

And I said, I don't know what that is. I'll have to go do some research on that. So I went to Google and I typed in lordship theology. And within about 30 seconds, I went, yep.

That's what I believe. That's what I believe. And it's simply this. I've stated it and we say it again and again and again, right? We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone, right? But having been saved, we evidence our salvation. There are ways you can observe whether or not somebody is in Christ.

[31:41] Good trees bear good fruit, right? This happens. It's the necessary outcome of that. We should make our calling and election sure, right? 1 John chapter 5, verse 4 and 5.

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Except the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God, right?

There will be a change. Not merely a mental ascent. Not merely someone saying, yeah, sure. Jesus died for my sin. And then there's nothing that comes from that. There's no proof. There's no evidencing of regeneration.

And I think it's really, really harmful. Even damning, right? That we would teach in that way. And I'll let you know that it's called free grace theology.

[32:41] Free grace theology. Which, I believe in free grace. So, you must understand that this title comes together. I put it in quotation marks.

Free grace theology. In my notes. I think it comes from a misunderstanding of what the Protestant Reformers meant by faith alone. Right? Right? They were not saying, faith alone plus works.

They were saying, it is by faith we are saved, which is evidenced by our works. But they reduced that down. And try to explain, I think, how the many myriads who come and respond to invitations given on Sunday mornings are, in fact, Christians.

Even though we're just not kind of sure what's going on with their lives. Right? We would call them backslidden or some other unbiblical term to try to explain such a thing.

Beloved, saving faith is a faith that works. Right? Not saved by it. But it does. Because we are changed.

[33:51] Because God is working in us by His Spirit. We will be able to take a survey of our lives. Right? And this is a work of the church that we do this together. That we help each other in this.

And say, am I on the path of Christ? Am I on the narrow way or am I on the broad way? There's two options here. And it's evidenced by our fruit.

So you'll hear that. And you'll hear that again and again and again. Because it is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thomas Brooks is on your bulletin.

A 17th century English non-conformist pastor. I'd like to be called a non-conformist pastor. Said, till men have faith in Christ, their best services are but glorious sins.

Those who have not been delivered by Christ cannot do anything to earn God's favor. But having placed our faith in Christ, our works are the evidence of said faith.

[35:00] Right? And again and again and again. We'll see this in Hebrews chapter 11. Okay, finally. And I'm going to speed way up here. Faith's foundation. And this is verse 3. I think verse 3 is so strangely placed on first reading.

It is interesting that he has defined it for us now. He said in verse 2, For by it, this faith, the people of old received their commendation. And it just feels to me like at this point he should launch right into verse 4.

Talking about the people of old. Just go ahead and jump in on Abel. And how it was that Abel was commended before God. But there's verse 3.

And he's talking again, the people of old's faith. But he says, By faith we understand. By faith we. He's including his original audience as well as us. Those who are in Christ now. By faith we understand. That the universe was created by the word of God.

[36:03] So that what is seen was not made out of things. That are visible. And this, I'll say, is still a bit of a head scratcher for me. I

don't know that I've fully sorted out why.

He doesn't say the people of old. He's starting at the very beginning of the Bible. And you're going to see him walk through the timeline of scripture. As he's bringing out these examples in chapter 11. But why he says we. By faith we. Understand that the universe was created by the word of God. So that what is seen was not made out of things.

That are visible. Now I do think he's beginning at the beginning. And that's why I titled this point Faith's Foundation. Starts with understanding that our God is the creator of the world. And therefore has the right to rule over the world. This is foundational to faith. Good gospel presentations begin at this point. That we believe that there is a creator God.

[37:06] We're created. He can demand things of us. He gets to make the rules. This is extremely important to what our faith builds to.

To say that God created the world. We find out in Colossians chapter 1. That Christ. Christ created the world. That's part of the Godhead.

And it was by his word. Powerful words. Mighty words. He spoke it into existence. Right? He didn't need to spin it into existence from some other matter.

He spoke and it was. Right? So that what is seen would be known to not be made out of things that are visible. The visible created from the invisible.

Right? So a very foundation. A very beginning point for that. But he says we. By faith we understand. So on my sabbatical.

[38:08] With a number of matters in mind. If you're new to the scene. I took a sabbatical some weeks ago. For about a month. I've been reading through the entirety of the Bible.

With a couple of themes in mind. And so I started in the book of Genesis. Genesis. And I spent a long time in Genesis chapter 1. Things stood out to me that just hadn't before.

And guys. I study the Bible a lot. Maybe not Genesis 1. Nearly as much as I should have. Right? As both the introduction to our scripture. As well as the Hebrew scriptures.

It's astounding. It's an incredible introduction. To all of the historical narrative. And beyond. There's a lot that's established in that very beginning.

In the narrative. Right? So I'm going to take a stab at why. I think he says by faith we understand. I think it's a far reaching thing that he's saying. And I could be wrong.

[39:09] So I will tell you that. I hope that I'm not going too far out of bounds. But from time to time. I think text requires to have a little bit of theological imagination. And be willing to say.

Maybe this is where he is headed. With this. Remember his original audience. Right? These are Jewish people. But they're Greek speaking Jewish people. But would have been much much more familiar.

Both I think with the Hebrew text. As well as the Greek version of it. The Septuagint. And we are so far removed from this. Right? Remember we're always studying an ancient ancient text.

Text. So. Sentence structure. The language itself. We're just. It's very lost on us. And it takes some digging around for our minds. To fully comprehend what could be meant.

For them. I don't think it would have been quite as hard. Where would their minds have gone? His original readers. What would they have thought when he says. By faith we understand.

[40:05] Would they have been as confused as myself? I don't think so. And here's a stab at why. So if you will. Turn to Genesis chapter 1. We read in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1.

You're likely familiar with. In the beginning. God created the heavens. And the earth. God created the firmament.

Right? And the sky. And everything above it. In the beginning. God created the heavens. And the earth. And then we see the. Six.

Day. Creation. Plus. The seventh day. Where God rests. And that goes through chapter 2. And verse 3. In our very first.

Two pages of our Bibles. The chapter breaks. Already screwed up. I think it should have come after. Chapter 2. And verse 3. But here we have it. So. Genesis chapter 1.

[41:04] Through Genesis chapter 2. And verse 3. Is this initial telling. Of how it is. That God created the world. Ex nihilo. Out of nothing.

Right? He spoke it. Into existence. And it has. A really cool. Hebrew. Literary structure. That. We just don't see on our. English.

Page. And what's extremely significant. In its structure. Is the number. Seven. Now I don't have the time. And I'm going to spare you. The boredom. Of hearing all about.

All the sevens. All throughout this. Very beginning. Intro here. But on the surface. You can see. The first seven. Being. That there's seven days. That the. World was ordered.

In. Seven days. But more than that. A couple others. I shouldn't say more than that. Others. In addition. The very first verse. In the beginning. God created.

[41:59] The heavens. And. The earth. In Hebrew. Is seven words. So it starts out that way. Verse two. Of Genesis chapter one.

Is. Fourteen words. So. Two times. Seven. There's some. Things happening with. Sevens. In the text here. The. Words. In.

Verse one. God. Heavens and earth. Appear. Throughout that. Passage. In multiples. Of. Sevens. And there are many other words. That do the very same thing.

There's something significant. Happening here. In this very wonderfully crafted. Right. God inspired text. Telling about the creation. Of the world. Right. We pick up the facts. Yes. God created it. And here's how he created it. This is the order in which it was. Created. But there's. Something else going on. In. The text itself. Right. They're moving us along. In an understanding.

[42:53] Of what's happening. And I think that it's this. On the seventh day. God. Who is infinite in power. Does not get tired. He rests.

On that day. He ceases from his working. And he. Rests. Right. And that word rest. In Hebrew. Can. Can mean a bit more. Than what we think of as resting.

But it's a. It's a settling in. It's a. Completing. Of the work. So he both stops. And completes. So this original narrative. Is moving us.

To an idea. Of. Completion. God creating. Out of nothing. Void. Right. The world. In which we live. Completing it.

Bringing it to this. Place of stasis. Right. And if we're reading it. And understanding it. In this way. God. Finished. Right.

[43:49] He. Rested. It was done. And he had declared it. Very good. Over and over. And over again. This. Is. Good. Then we ought to be in anticipation.

And why. There's a. The rest of the book. What. What happened. Right. Why does the story go on. It would seem that it was completed. Well. We can. Read in. Chapter three. Exactly.

What happened. Right. That. That completion. That rest. Right. Was ruined. But this original telling. Sets up for us. What he intends to do.

Across the entire historical. Narrative. To bring it all. To a. Complete. And final rest. And he sets up. A. System. Right. That's picked up. In other places. In other parts of. The historical narrative. For how God's people. Were supposed to remember. This.

[44:45] Coming to completion. Process. Right. So. He models. Right. On the seventh day. Rest. And then. Commands. Exodus 20. That people would remember.

The Sabbath day. And. Keep it holy. For on that day. Who. Somebody. Rested. Right. That we would have built. Into our regular rhythms. A recognition.

Of. Who God is. And what he's done. And what he is going to fully. And finally. Do. There are other. Times. And.

Things. Set into place. In the Old Testament. Narrative. That. Refer to. Seven. Like in Deuteronomy chapter. Fifteen. You can read about the year of. Release.

Right. Every. Seven years. Right. Deaths were forgiven. Slaves were set free. The land. Was to rest. Right. So that it would be. Productive. And Leviticus 25.

[45:41] You can read about the year of. Jubilee. Which happened every. Forty nine years. Which is what? Seven times. Seven. Right. Building into. Our psyche. And our understanding.

That God is going to bring. Everything to. Completion. Now. If. You. Want to get more familiar. As I'm. In the process of doing right now.

With this idea of sevens. Right. We see all throughout the biblical narrative. That when sevens are used. There's typically a. Symmetrical structure. And it's supposed to draw our attention. To the beginning.

The end. And the middle. Something significant is happening in. The middle. And this was where my brain got going on this. Because I was confused. Over my sabbatical. About. The fourth. Day. Okay. On the fourth day. God creates. The sun. The moon. And the stars. On the first day. He's created light and dark. This is what got me. I went. Wait a second.

[46:36] God created light and day. Like. Yeah. Excuse me. Light and dark. Night and day. On the first day. But then he created the sun. The moon. And the stars. On the fourth.

Day. It's odd. Right. So there's your first. There's your middle. And then your seventh day. He. Rests. Right. So all of those. Have something to do with time.

Right. And those things are given. Are ordered. Helping us understand. This rhythm. That he intends for our life. To have. When you look in. Genesis chapter 1.

Verse 14. Says. And God said. Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens. To separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs. And for seasons.

And for days. And years. And we think immediately. When we read seasons. Of. Fall. Spring. Summer. Etc. Right. Isn't this exactly where our minds go?

[47:34] But it could be. And would be better translated. Before signs. And for. Feasts. So in Leviticus chapter 23. There are seven. Feasts.

Right. And they all take place. Multiples of. Seven. Right. That God's people would be thinking. Toward. Remembering. And thinking toward. The final completion.

That will. One day. Occur. Now. Because I'm afraid. That I may. I've totally lost you. Or made you go. What is he talking about? What is he talking about?

I think. That that's what's happening. In Hebrews. Chapter 11. That the author. Has been talking about. This enduring faith. The persevering faith.

Through struggle. Through trial. Then he defines it as. The assurance of things. Hoped for. The conviction. Of things. Not. Seen.

[48:31] That. Full final day. When. Everything will. Come. To. Completion. Completion. He says. Provide the people of old. Receive their commendation. By faith. We.

Understand. That the universe. Was created. By the word of God. So that what is seen. Was not made. Out of things. That are visible. I think that's what he's doing. He's ushering their minds. Into the meta narrative. Of God's enduring faithfulness. And his plan to bring all things to completion. And then. He's going to step. Back. In verse four.

To. To talk about. Abel. And he's going to keep walking through. The biblical narrative. In that way. He's setting up like. The thematic element. Of the. Entirety.

Of the Bible. Before he starts talking about. The people of old. And the commendation. That they received. Or. He's just talking about.

[49:23] The foundation being. We should believe. That God's a creator. Certainly that. Maybe. The other. The other. So. I'm. Putting forth to you. Seven represents completion.

And this introduction. To our Bibles. And the telling of the creation story. Gives us an outline. For how we're going to move forward. To. Completion. Right.

So they would have. Had the significance. In mind. As they picked it up. And read. This letter. To them. They may have had.

The words of Christ. In their mind. Matthew 11. 28. And following. Where he says. Come to me. All who labor. And are heavy laden. And I will give you. Rest.

Take my yoke upon you. And learn from me. For I am gentle. And lonely in heart. And you will find rest. For your souls. For my yoke is easy. And my burden. Is light.

[50:18] Can you see that reading into it? Like. You have suffered. You are tired. Bear up. Right. Have faith. Show yourself faithful.

Look to the things that are to come. Right. They are worth awaiting. Find your rest. In the surety. That all of this will come to pass.

In Christ. And my prayer for us today. Is that we would be a people. Who would do. The very same.
Let's pray together. Let's pray together.