

We're taking a detour.

Hebrews: written to Jewish believers to show how the Jewish Old Testament and traditions point to Jesus.

Chapters 11 and 12 talk about what we should do about it.

Hebrews 12:1-2 New Living Translation (NLT)

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

Lets unpack a key phrase.

We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.

This is how other translators have rendered it.

King James Version

Jesus the author and finisher of our faith

New American Standard Bible

Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith

New International Version

Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith

English Standard Version

Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith

The Message

Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in

J.B. Phillips New Testament

Jesus the source and the goal of our faith

The Passion Translation

Jesus who birthed faith within us and who leads us forward into faith's perfection

Good News Translation

Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end

I'm going to use Philip's words but add to them a bit.

SOURCE

AND

GOAL

1ultimate

SOURCE

2active

AND

3ultimate

GOAL

4active

With that in mind we'll start our journey through Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:1-3 New Living Translation (NLT)

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

Hebrews 11:4 New Living Translation (NLT)

It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

And now we come to Abel. Not much is written about Abel. What we read in Hebrews is about as much as we read anywhere.

Genesis 4:3-11 New Living Translation (NLT)

3 When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. 4 Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, 5 but he did not accept Cain and his gift.

God doesn't explain why. For that we go bak to mom and dad, Adam and Eve.

Genesis 3:7 New Living Translation (NLT)

7 At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

Genesis 3:8-11 New Living Translation (NLT)

8 When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. 9 Then the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

11 "Who told you that you were naked?" the Lord God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

Genesis 3:21 New Living Translation (NLT)

21 And the Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

Leaves could not cover the shame and fear that had come between them and God.

Only the shedding of blood could.

Our first step towards the cross.

1) Abel's offering/faith was based on God:

WHAT GOD HAD DONE
WHAT GOD WAS DOING
WHAT GOD WAS GOING TO DO

Cain's offering/faith was based on Cain.

Genesis 4:3-11 New Living Translation (NLT)

3 When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. **4** Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, **5** but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

6 “Why are you so angry?” the Lord asked Cain. “Why do you look so dejected? **7** You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.”

8 One day Cain suggested to his brother, “Let's go out into the fields.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

1) Abel's faith did not stir up anger, jealousy or accusation.

Most of us have never offered a burnt sacrifice but this contrast carries on throughout scripture.

Let's look at an example we can identify with.

The letter to the church in Ephesus from the book of Revelation.

Revelation 2:2-6 New Living Translation (NLT)

2 “I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don’t tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. 3 You have patiently suffered for me without quitting.

4 “But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first!

5 Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.

THE TEST: IS THIS THE FAITH OF JESUS?

Did Jesus ever lose his first love?

Mark 1:35 New Living Translation (NLT)

35 Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray.

John 14:10 New Living Translation (NLT)

10 Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me.

Did Jesus’ faith lead to anger, jealousy or accusation?

Luke 15:1-2 New Living Translation (NLT)

15 Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. 2 This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

They came to him

Matthew 8:1-3 New Living Translation (NLT)

8 Large crowds followed Jesus as he came down the mountainside. 2 Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached him and knelt before him. “Lord,” the man said, “if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.”

3 Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!” And instantly the leprosy disappeared.

“Lepers: worse sinners than the rest of us”

What does leprosy look like today?

“He has aids.”

“She’s pregnant.”

“He’s alcoholic.”

“She’s divorced.”

“Worse sinners than the rest of us.”

There are people suffering in our communities because of disease and life circumstances. What if their friends said to them, “Whatever you do don’t hang out with Christians. They’ll just make you feel worse. They’ll shame you and talk about your sin.”

My we never give people reason to say that about the church of Jesus Christ because they never would have said it about Jesus.

There are many great prophecies about what Jesus was going to do but there are also some about who he is.

Isaiah 42 New Living Translation (NLT)

42 “Look at my servant, whom I strengthen.

He is my chosen one, who pleases me.

I have put my Spirit upon him.

He will bring justice to the nations.

2 He will not shout

or raise his voice in public.

3 He will not crush the weakest reed

or put out a flickering candle.

He will bring justice to all who have been wronged.

OUR faith:

-must be based on WHAT GOD HAS DONE / IS DOING /
IS GOING TO DO

-must lead to love, hope, dignity in the lives of others.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we have Abel as a witnesses to the life of faith, 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.