

Hold fast to the Profession of our Faith

Hebrews 10:18-11:40

Key Verse 10:23

„Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.“

In chapter 1 through 10:10 the author of Hebrews clearly showed that the Gospel of Christ Jesus is the final and definite revelation of God's salvation ministry, done once for all and in effect forever. Jesus is superior to angels, to Moses and to all teachings of this earth. Jesus is the true rest, which we can attain through making every effort, hearing God's word. Jesus is the true high priest, who always lives and intercedes for us. In Jesus, we are completely saved, with perfect and eternal redemption.

From chapter 10:19 we will study the practical part of Hebrews. The question here is, how we can live? Simply said, we will live by faith! More precisely, this means to live by holding fast to the profession of our faith. There was a tendency among the Jewish Christians that we can also find with us to shrink back from the profession and the life of faith. The reasons may be numerous, for example spiritual issues, hardships, persecution, etc. But the author clearly concludes that shrinking back from faith is in no way a good idea, but a severe mistake. On the other hand, those who like numerous ancestors of faith hold fast to the profession of faith and run the course of faith until the experience the surprising work of God and God's reward. They receive God's appreciation and live very influentially as heroes of faith, spiritual conquerors, and even world changers! Today, let us learn how to live such glorious lives by faith until the end as we hold fast to the profession of faith.

I. Persevere so that you will receive what was promised (10:19-39)

Look at verses 19 through 21. Verse 19 begins with the expression, "Therefore". The author of Hebrews now draws the conclusion based on his teachings so far, first summarizing what we "have". What do we have? We have confidence, to enter the Most Holy Place. Nobody in this world was or is able to enter the Most Holy Place by his own works or his own righteousness. Not even Jeff Bezos will all his money can move even one millimeter into it. But God provided Jesus as the true high priest, who dying on the cross on Golgotha offered his own blood as the perfect sacrifice, once for all and forever. Now we have a new and living way opened through the curtain that separated us from God. Finally, we have the true high priest Jesus.

How then, can we live? Look at verse 22. "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." Firstly, we can be cleansed and draw near to God. The same order of steps is given in Hebrews 12:1,2. First, throwing off the sin that entangles us. Then we can fix our eyes on Jesus. Then all other steps will follow. The first step is always sincere repentance and accepting God's grace, for example through writing a sincere personal testimony. Through this our hearts are sprinkled and our guilty conscience is cleansed. Then we are ready to draw near to God with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith to experience the victorious life of faith.

Look at verse 23. „Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.“ The author encouraged the Jewish Christians to hold unswervingly to the promise of hope. In former times, the Jewish Christian set their hope on the laws of Moses, the promises of the Old Testament, and perhaps on the restoration of an earthly Jewish kingdom. But when they came to know Christ, the began to profess Christ, who is the better covenant with better promises, as their new and true hope. Then they experienced hardships and persecution. They became insecure and wavering. They doubted whether it was good for them to set their hope on Jesus and profess the hope of Christ to their fellow Jews and even to the Gentiles. The author encourages them clearly. "Yes, absolutely! Hold unswervingly to the hope we

profess!" Why? How could they overcome their uncertainty? Because God is faithful! Faithfulness is God's unique quality. In this universe, everything is relative, even time, space and location. But God's faithfulness is the absolute constant that keeps the universe together. The Israelites were unfaithful and failed again and again. But God is faithful. God carried out his salvation plan faithfully, sending his one and only son Jesus according to his promises. Jesus himself fulfilled God's salvation plan, obeying God and fulfilling all God's promises even while hanging on the cross. Through church history we learned that many movements and organizations that started well have later failed. But God in all times continued to carry out his salvation ministry through his remnants faithfully. God is also faithful in these modern times where the Christian faith and life is mocked, and ridiculed, and even persecuted. Faithful God used the bible study ministry of UBF to raise many bible teachers and missionaries and spiritual leaders among campus students in the whole world. Faithful God also is at work through GLEF raising next generations as global spiritual leaders for their nations and for the world. God who is faithful will fulfill his world salvation plan and his promises until the end of times when Jesus comes again. Therefore, in these times of relativism, humanism, wars, and digitalization of relationships, let us unswervingly profess the hope of Christ through 10,000 1:1 bible study teams and raising disciples of Jesus at the campuses in Europe, America, Russia, and in the Middle countries.

Look at verse 24. "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." The true face of humanism is self-centeredness and helplessness. Its motto is: "This is your problem. Help yourself!" But the author encourages the Christian, not to be self-centered and helpless, but to spur one another toward love and good deeds. One next generation wanted to leave the life of faith after graduation of high school for an autonomous life. But God's servant encouraged her: "Rejoice that you participate in Christ!" He spurred her to work together with her father for God's ministry and to love God producing a gracious video about the weekly work of God. Instead of retiring, God's servant encourages and spurs next generation coworkers not to live with petty desires but with vision as global spiritual leaders, helping them to develop their spiritual gifts through factual studies, church history lectures, and by raising them as messengers and announcers of the message.

Look at verse 25. "Let us not give up meeting together, as many are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching." The author emphasizes the importance of spiritual meetings. Seemingly, there were some who increasingly ignored the spiritual life together ministry. Perhaps, they did not see any practical benefit in it for themselves. We see the same tendency today, with the relationships and even spiritual meetings becoming digitalized. But the work of God happens through the spiritual life-together ministry. It not only means coming together for Sunday worship service, but also to have early morning prayer fellowship, spiritual breakfast fellowship, bible study fellowship, Friday Meeting, and finally common life. God also works mightily through GLEF fellowship. One next generation missionary confessed in her testimony, that GLEF and early morning prayer are for her the best time of the year and during the day, respectively. Let us not give up meeting together, but on the contrary let us invite our next generations, sheep, and coworkers to spiritual life-together ministry and experience the word of God.

Look at verses 26 through 31. In these verses the author warns the believers very seriously, to sin deliberately. Deliberate sin means to go back to the old life since one does not want to struggle spiritually anymore. Such persons are deceived by the devil, excusing themselves, "I cannot. I cannot. I do not want". But going back to the old life means to trample the Son of God under foot and to insult the Spirit of grace. For such people, no sacrifice of sins is left. Their lives are reduced to a fearful expectation of death and judgement.

Look at verses 35 and 36. "So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised." In verses 32 through 34 the author reminded the Jewish Christians of their spiritual heroism when they

started their life of faith with Christ. They stood their ground in the face of suffering. They were publicly exposed, insulted, and persecuted. They suffered with those in prison and their property was confiscated. Despite humanly speaking unbearable sufferings, they professed their love to and their hope in Christ with joy. Through their spiritual heroism many, even Gentiles, came to believe in Christ. Indeed, the Jewish Christians had been a blessing like fertilizer to soil so that the first Gentile Christians could not only survive but grow as leaders of the emerging Church, in Antioch, in Ephesus, in Rome, and everywhere. But now, these Jewish Christians who have been the pioneers of faith, which the Gentile Christians had so much to thank for, were in great danger to throw away confidence, which means throwing away their faith. There may have been many understandable reasons. But it doesn't change the fact that throwing away their faith also means throwing away their reward. The reward of faith does not come from what great deeds one has done in the past, but the reward of faith is given to those who hold unswervingly to the hope and faith of Christ until the end. (That is why Jesus said to Jews, "The first shall be last and the last shall be first".) Therefore, the author encouraged the Jewish Christians, to persevere. To persevere means to do God's will until the end. In order to persevere, one needs patience and endurance. Those who persevere will receive what was promised to them by God.

Look at verses 38 and 39. " 'But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.' But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved." The author quotes the famous word of the prophet Habakuk, "The righteous will live by faith" . Through this word of God from Habakuk, Martin Luther recognized the secret of faith, and became a reformer, who changed the world forever. What is this secret? The righteous will live by faith. The righteous begins his life through faith and he finishes his life through faith. The Jewish Christians have wished to shrink back after having done much for the Lord and to live an unbelieving petty life. But God is not pleased by those who fall out of the life of faith. Those who fall back into an unbelieving life will be destroyed that is the fate for all unbelieving people. But those who instead of drawing back live by faith until it is finished will be saved and they will live as spiritual victors, conquerors and even history makers.

My parents gave their whole life for campus bible ministry and for growing disciples of Jesus among campus students and next generation, professing their hope in Christ that God will make Germany and Europe again a shepherd nation and a missionary sending continent. But after serving the European ministry faithfully for 40 years they were judged and forsaken. But they do not live with anger or disappointment. They are not like the dead, but they are alive by faith, holding on to professing their hope in Christ, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." By faith they live to rebuild the broken spiritual walls and to prepare the environment for the spiritual reawakening ministry. By faith they live to serve and mobilize the next generation through GLEF and to build 120 mission base camps, beginning in M countries.

My hope as a migrant was to become a doctor and even a famous scientist or boss of a university hospital. But without the hope of Christ, my life was only a vicious circle in the sins of lust, fear and loser mentality. But when I accepted Christ as the head of my life, I was able to experience many histories of faith through obedience of faith. I also experienced God's great blessing to establish the first house church of a 2nd generation missionary in Europe with the most wonderful women of faith, M. Pauline Chang, from New Jersey UBF. God entrusted also the first 3rd generation missionaries of Europe UBF. I have seen that through my profession of the hope of Christ also many other 2nd generation missionaries in Europe and even in America could receive God's blessing. On the other hand, I have been so busy. So far I was not successful to raise a disciple at Bonn University Medical School. In the last three years, I have witnessed public insult and persecution. In addition, I looked at many problems of myself, of sheep and coworkers, who we all became older. I asked myself whether it is now the time to shrink back from the life of faith and, let's say, to concentrate on the medical career. I was tempted, to leave the spiritual meetings and life-together ministry. But I thank God for God's servant who always encourages me not to shrink back, but to hold fast to the hope and faith of Christ through Ezekiel 37:10, asking the right question: "Son of man, can these bones live?" God encourages me through the faithfulness of my wife and through the faithfulness of

the coworkers to repent about my unfaithfulness and unbelief and to unswervingly hold fast to living by faith and professing Christ through co-working for the ministry of the word, for GLEF and for establishing mission basecamps in the M world. I pray to grow as a bible teacher like Ezra and as a rock of faith like Peter to conquer Bonn University Medical School, as a good example for the next generation and as a pioneer of M countries.

II. Faith, that please God and overcomes the World (11:1-40)

In Chapter 11 the author reports about some ancestors of faith, who through unswervingly living by faith received God's recognition and God's reward. Their example inspires us for eternity, and through their faith they are speaking and encouraging us today.

Look at verse 1. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Firstly, it is important to understand, what faith is about. Faith has nothing to do with wishful thinking. On the contrary, faith is being sure and being certain of what one does not see. By faith we see and we live with absolute confidence and hope in God's hope and promises, e.g. that God has already fulfilled his hope and promises for mobilizing the next generation, for the spiritual reawakening and for M countries.

Look at verse 6. "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Those who only expect something from God without believing will receive nothing. But those, who come to God by faith until will please God and receive God's reward.

Look at verse 3. "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." The foundation of true faith is creation faith that all things that have been made have been made out of nothing only through God's word. As a scientifically trained person I can say, that science has no problem with creation faith at all. Indeed, nature itself testifies about its creator God.

Look at verses 4 through 7. Abel, Enoch and Noah are the first noteworthy ancestors of faith in human history. Even though they lived such a long time ago and the world has changed several times since then we know of them because of their faith.

Verse 8 through 22 are about the faith of the patriarchs, beginning from Father Abraham. God called him when he was a noble father without child and 75 years old, promising him land and countless heirs. But from a human point of view, it was impossible for Abraham and his wife Sarah to receive an heir, with Abraham being 100 years old and Sarah 90 years old. Because of impatience and unbelief, they made a big problem, Ishmael. But God helped them to hold fast to the promise of God. Finally, they received the heir of the promise, Isaac, from whose line Christ the Messiah came. Through faith Abraham became the Father of all God's children.

Verses 23 through 30 report about Moses' faith. By the faith of his parents, Moses was not drunk in the Nile and eaten by Crocodiles, but he was saved and became an Egyptian prince. Without faith Moses could have become a Pharaoh and later a mummy in the Museum of Cairo. But by faith prince Moses refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to be mistreated with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. Moses' faith made him to one of the greatest leaders on earth who used for leading and saving a whole nation.

Look at verse 32 through 38. In the time of judges, there were great heroes of faith. They were Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the Prophets. Today, almost all children have heard of their history. By faith they lived as spiritual victors and conquerors despite the most adverse situation. During the intertestamental period, there were also countless nameless heroes of faith, who refused to

renounce their faith despite the threat of death and died as martyrs. They are those, who the world was not worthy of.

Finally, let us look at verse 39 and 40. By faith the ancestors of faith received God's testimony. But they have not received the final victory of God. Verse 40 says, "God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect." We are more privileged than our great ancestors of faith. We are more privileged, because we have seen the promise of "something better" fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Today, people are always looking for "something better", a better smartphone, a better church, even a better partner or children. But the author of Hebrews clearly teaches, that there is nothing better than the hope of Christ Jesus. Let us therefore hold unswervingly to confessing the hope of Christ Jesus and let us be history makers for the spiritual reawakening in America, Europe, Russia and even in M countries!

In today's passage, we have learned to unswervingly hold fast to the confession of the hope of Christ Jesus. Let us live by faith until the end doing God's will for the spiritual reawakening and world mission until the ends of the earth. God bless you, by faith, like numerous ancestors of faith, to live a spiritual leaders, conquerors, and even history makers.