

Suffering Losses to Make Gains

The Book of Hebrews

By Chris Hand

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Hebrews 11:20-29; Exodus 2:1-15
Preached on: Sunday, August 6, 2020

Crich Baptist Church
Market Place, Crich
Derbyshire. DE4 5DD (UK)

Website: www.crichbaptist.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/crichbaptist

Well, we are looking this evening in Hebrews 11, chapter 11 indeed verses 20 to 29 that we read a moment ago. And the title being this, "Suffering Losses to Make Gains." Suffering losses to make gains. We've been looking at the matter of faith. Faith is being persuaded about the reality of what is unseen. Things that we cannot presently see, but we are persuaded that they are real, and we act in the light of that. That's our conviction. We can't see God, but we're persuaded that he is real. That what he has said about us in the Bible, we are persuaded is also real. And we act in the light of that.

So, many, many of God's promises, well many of them have been fulfilled. Many have not. And particularly the promise of heaven, eternal life, what will happen after death. Well, there is a lot will happen after death. In fact, most of life is after death. And we're persuaded of that. We believe that. We haven't seen death. We've been through death ourselves. We know others who have and only too recently, but we haven't been there yet. And we, therefore, following what we have here, the evidence of scripture, resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his solemn promise to us that we trust in him where he is, there we will be also. We can't see heaven. We can't see that place. We can't see the place that he has prepared for us, but we believe in it. We believe it is real.

And Abraham, we saw that, didn't we, last time, believed. Believed that there was a country that God would give him, yes, on earth, but which was like a token of a greater promise, the promise of heaven. And so, he left behind Ur of the Chaldees. He showed by the big decision that he made, a big departure from the way of life he had been following, that he believed what the invisible God had said to him about this yet to be revealed land was true and that, moreover, that yet to be revealed place, heaven, was real, and that he, Abraham, though he was an old man, and his wife was old, was going to have a child, and that child was going to have great significance. Why, it's Isaac of verse 20 that we started with in Hebrews 11 here. That child would in the fullness of time produce other children, who would produce other children, and, eventually, from that line will come the Savior. Remarkable! Abraham knew he needed saving. And he knew there was a Savior to come, and he knew that his own son was connected with that. That from his family line would come that Savior. And so, he is looking for heaven, and he is looking for a land, and he was waiting for a family that he didn't have when he went, but he believed God would give him. What a significant family he believed that it would be.

We also saw that that day came, and Abraham was called of God to offer up that son, Isaac, in whom were wrapped up all the promises of a messiah to come, of eternal life that would be found through him, that he was to put him to death, which would seem to go against all of those promises. Yet, Abraham believed that even if his son was to be there dead on that altar that he was making, God would then raise his son, because, obviously, because God had promised that that son was going to produce children that would produce the Savior. So, if Abraham had to kill him, then the son would rise from the dead. He hadn't seen that happen before, but he believed God. Faith, believing something invisible, as yet, not seen before, but believing, because God has promised that it will come true. And that was remarkable faith, wasn't it? Never to be repeated, and that's why it's still looked back up to as well some faith that that was.

So, our first heading this evening, as we just open up this subject a little bit more and consider what other lessons there are to be gleaned from these Old Testament saints. The heading is this, "Believing the Future Belongs to God." Alright, believing the future belongs to God. The future. Have you seen the future? Have I seen the future? I know. I cannot tell you with any great degree of confidence what happens tomorrow, or what will happen to you, what will happen to me. I got things in my diary. Whether they will happen or not, I don't know. Something else may happen. Something totally unexpected. Because the future is invisible. It's unknown. And, we might say, God may give us hints and may give us some warnings along the way, but it's largely unknowable. He's not going to divulge that to us, as he did to prophets in the day of old.

So, there is the future. Invisible. Can't see it from here. But we believe that what God has said about the future, he will fulfill. A future we haven't seen, we haven't lived it yet, but we believe that whatever he says about it, he will fulfill it. Invisible God, the unknowable future, but faith is convinced that what God has said about that invisible future, that unknowable future from where we are, is full of promises, full of reality that God will make clear, because God himself is real. And there are examples here where people believed things about the future which they couldn't have made happen themselves, and they couldn't have fulfilled, but which they believed God would fulfill. We have the instances here of Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph. That sort of immediate line from Abraham. The writer is preceding at the leisurely pace to begin with in this chapter. He goes and quickens the pace soon and brings names in left, right, and center to make his point, but he's deliberately making it here. He starts, doesn't he, with Abel, and he takes us through Enoch, and Noah, and all these patriarchs. Abraham, as we've been seeing. And now, he doesn't linger long with Isaac, Abraham and Sarah's son, the son as the promise, nor then with Jacob, one of Isaac's twin sons, nor then with Joseph, one of the children of Jacob, one of his twelve sons. And each of them though, just a quick summary, a quick example, and, really in a sense, making the same point that each of those men spoke about the future they hadn't lived, and that the people that they're talking about hadn't lived, but they believed what God had said about the future would come true. No, they're not going to be there to see it, actually. Even though they are going to be dead before any of this actually takes place, but they believe in speaking those things and prophesying those things that they will come to pass.

Well, so what do we have here? There's Isaac, and with his two sons, Jacob and Esau, and he blesses them concerning things to come. Well, the greater blessing is upon Jacob. Therein lies quite a story. It's all there in Genesis, isn't it? But it is Jacob who is going to carry forward the family line that's going then eventually produce the Messiah. Not Esau, even though Esau is the firstborn. They're twins, yes, but actually Esau was the older one. Jacob is the younger. But actually, the case is going to be the older is going to serve the younger. That was spoken. And Isaac farther confirms that over these two boys when Isaac himself by now was quite an aged man. But he believed what God had said about the future would come to pass, and that from that understanding, so he prophesied. He spoke about the future of these two, by now, men, if you will, the blessings for Esau, and there were some, and the blessings, more spiritually blessings that there were for Jacob. Impossible to have known. Couldn't have made it come true. But he believed that God's promise would surely come to pass, because God is faithful. Moving along quickly.

There is Jacob, and we notice when he was dying. When he was dying. Well, many people when they are dying have no thought about the future at all. They can't see anything. They can only see death. They might fight it, struggle against it, and somehow hope they can get away with not dying, if you will. Well, full on hope that. But there is Jacob when he might have had plenty of other things on his mind, his own demise, but no. He is thinking about the future, and he is thinking about Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. We really should put it the other way around, Manasseh and Ephraim. Manasseh was the elder. Again, there are twins here. And there is Ephraim the younger, but, again, God reverses the order, and Ephraim is going to be the more fruitful of the branch there. And Joseph's family, Manasseh, the older, is again going to be in second place compared to the younger. And Jacob prophesies about this. In fact, when Joseph brings his two sons to Jacob, to his father, and asks for his father's blessing upon them, Joseph was fully expecting that the greater blessing would be on Manasseh, and when Jacob, an aged man, puts his hands, as it were, the wrong way, the hand that would produce, as it were, or confer the greater blessing, he put it on Ephraim's head, and Joseph, "Oh, he's got it the wrong way around here." And Jacob corrected him, "No." He hasn't. And he spoke about the future of those children. He couldn't have known. He couldn't have made it come true. He's dying, and yet he believes he has the word of God. He's going to prophesy. And of course, it does actually, surely come to pass. So, that was his situation there.

And then Joseph, and we notice again when he was dying, right? When he was dying. And he is not now just, the whole thing collapsing in about him, as though now, he'd reached the age of one hundred ten when he died, as if now that's it. "I'm just going to focus on this and try and, well, survive death, if you will." Most people might somehow try to survive death or cope with it when it comes, but they really are afraid of it, and they can't see anything beyond it. But Joseph could see plenty beyond it. A lot beyond it. And while now the people were in Egypt, gone down there, Joseph, remarkable wasn't it, how God sent him on ahead, and all the way in which eventually then Jacob and all Joseph's brothers, who mostly ill treated him, but they all end up in Egypt. But that's not to be their home, because their home is in Canaan, where Abraham had been shown, "You'll

have a land. You're not going to settle in it now. You're just a pilgrim in it, but one day you are going to settle here. Your descendants will come here."

And Joseph is not just thinking about his death now, and end of life now, and, "Oh, I am just going to keep my focus on that." You can read actually the last book of Genesis that he says very solemnly to the people of that day that time will come. God will visit them, and take them from Egypt, and take them to Canaan. And so as to remind them how Joseph himself believed that, they were to take his bones with them. And they took him at his word. They embalmed him, put him in a coffin. And when the time came to leave Egypt, they took the bones of Joseph with them, because they remembered the promise that Joseph had made about things that happened hundreds of years in advance. An unknowable future, but no. It was God speaking. And by faith, Joseph spoke about his bones. They're not going to stay in Egypt. God is going to visit you, and he is going to take you from this place, and you're to take me with you, my bones, and bury them there, because that is where my heart is. That's where I am believing for. And that's to keep their focus on that too.

So, believing that the future belongs to God. They had revelation. They had prophecies there to help them there in that and could speak according to that future. Saw a future which God had opened up to them, but it still needed to be fulfilled. They still needed to trust God and believe in his power to fulfill it before they would speak it. We might not have that direct revelation, but as we look at the future, unknown, unknowable, we believe God knows that future, and that as we go on in our days in our pilgrimage, the same God gave to Joseph, and to Jacob, and to Isaac, and to Abraham thoughts about the future will be the same God who will be with us in the future. He will accompany us and be present with us, and whatever we face in that future, well, Abraham, and, well, all of them faced quite considerable challenges, quite considerable difficulties. Joseph par excellence. That God was with him, and God will be with us. And though we can't prophesy about that future, and there have been some, my word, they never learn. These false prophets there standing in pulpits telling you that coronavirus was going to be dead gone by some date in May. Well, that hasn't quite happened, hasn't it? No wonder. They're not sent of God. They're not speaking the word of God. It's nonsense.

But we believe that God will be with us in that future, even if we can't prophesy that future and speak about it with some authority. That same God, who is the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of Joseph, accompanies us into the future. And we can trust him with that. And if we hit difficulties, we can trust him with that. He will deliver. He delivers his people. It's what he does. It's the God he is, the helper. He's a friend to his people, and he will be a friend to you and to me.

Second heading, "Moses' Obedience." Moses' obedience. Why, the writer here, doesn't he, develops Moses a little bit more. You could develop it, and develop it farther, and we haven't got the time to do that. But here, again, is a real case of obedience, of believing something which looks hugely unlikely and which has never happened before, and that it will take place, because God has said. God is trustworthy, and Moses shows us this. He believes, verse 27, in the invisible God. He can't see him, but he believes in him. He

believes, verse 26, in the reward of heaven. He hasn't seen heaven, but he believes in it, fervently believes in it.

And we can see, in verse 23, his parents had great faith. We read about it in Exodus 2, great faith. Why? Pharaoh had put out a decree. All male Hebrew babies were to die. But for some brave Hebrew midwives who didn't carry out that edict, many would have died. Many more would have died. But anyway, it was still very dangerous. You had a male child born in your household, why, somebody could blow the whistle on you, and somebody would come round and do something horrible. Kill that baby before your eyes. These parents took a great risk, because they believed there was something, something about this child. There was something about him that made it very evident to them that they must do everything in their power to save that child's life. Something that they were informed of God, and so, they did something incredible, didn't they, making that ark of bulrushes and daubing it there with asphalt and pitch, and then putting it on the river and just sending Miriam, Moses's sister there to just watch and see what will happen. Well, you could only too well imagine, I mean, talk about child care or anything like that. Take that child into protection, wouldn't they, if your parents were minded to do that to their child. Yet, they knew that if they did that, something would happen.

They couldn't have foreseen what it was. It was remarkable, wasn't it? Their child gets found by Pharaoh's daughter and ends up then being brought up in Pharaoh's household. A Hebrew child that Pharaoh wanted to be put to death, but actually now at Pharaoh's expense, this child is being nurtured. The parents believed God would do something here. He surely did. So, the parents had faith. They couldn't see how. They couldn't see why something could happen, but they believed if they did this, something would happen.

And then, we have Moses showing his obedience, and we're going to come to the obedience where it really hurts in a moment, but having the Passover. Believing, that by now the plagues having run their course through Egypt, we now come to the final warning to Pharaoh, the final word from heaven to Pharaoh. If he does not heed this, then all the firstborn in Egypt will die from Pharaoh's house down to the kind of lowliest person in the whole country. But there would be a distinction God would make. His own people, what they had to do is this, wasn't it? They had to observe the Passover. They had to take a lamb without defect, a little lamb, and kill the lamb at the end of the day, and then eat the lamb in a very particular way. And before they ate the lamb, take some of the blood from the lamb. Put some on the doorposts and on the door lintel. And God said that seeing the blood he would pass over that house, sending the angel, death, the judgment upon them. If the angel saw a house where the blood was, the angel would miss that house out. Go to another house instead.

Well, they had never seen that before. Would this work? If you did this, would this work? Or would not all the firstborn of the Hebrew families die? And of course, it worked. God promised. God said. This would be what would establish and keep them safe. That the blood would shelter them, because that Passover looks forward to the Lord Jesus Christ and how his blood covers the sins, protects, preserves his people. Well, they had never seen that done before, never had that kind of experience before. But Moses instructed

them, because Moses believed. God has spoken. God will fulfill this. And he does. And all the firstborn of the Egyptians died.

And then the Red Sea. The parting of the Red Sea in verse 29. By faith. There was a sea! A sea. Behind you Pharaoh, who at first relented at the blow of losing all their firstborn in Egypt, and finally, he conceded, "Go." But then changes his mind. God hardens his heart. He goes pursuing them. He sends his best chariots to pursue them. Miraculously, they catch the Israelites, the Hebrews. But they've got the obstacle of the Red Sea ahead of them. There they are. Many of the people there are saying, "It is because there are no graves in Egypt you brought us out here! How are we going to get through this? There is a sea! Seas and seas, and loads of people here. We've got no boats. We've got our possessions. How are we getting through this?"

And God declares that Moses should stretch out his rod over the water. And he does. And God sends a strong east wind. All that nice water banks up and parts away. And they're going to pass through on dry land. And Moses declares that "The Egyptians that you have seen today, you will not see them again." Because having passed through on dry land, something never been done before, something which you wouldn't think if you held out your rod over it would make any difference at all. God had said it would, and Moses believed God's promise, and it came true. Then of course, having got the other side, he then holds his rod back over the sea, and it closes in upon the Egyptians and that was the end of them. They were drowned. Well, that was faith again. Moses' obedience. What God had showed him to do, believing that what had never been done before, what had never worked in that way before, would work, because God had said it will work, and that this will protect your life, and that this will save you from the Egyptians. You'll go through on dry land. Walking along on the very bed of the sea.

Well, we have a book full of God speaking. God's word. God's promises. The Bible. Here God speaks. Do we take it seriously? Moses took God's word seriously. Jacob did. Joseph did. Isaac did. Abraham did. But do we? And really, that, of course, is what the writer is saying to the people here. Do you? Do you actually believe in these promises that you have? And New Covenant promises in Christ, so much greater promises with the resurrection of Jesus Christ to kind of make those promises stand out the more. So, all the more we should have faith that what God has said is true.

We obey. We follow in obedience, because we believe that that obedience is actually very, very worthwhile. Very, very worthwhile! It has a great reward. It's heaven itself, isn't it? It's heaven itself. We believe, though we have not seen heaven, that obeying what God has spoken to us about, and pointed us to his Son, and promised that in his Son forgiveness of sin can be obtained, the peace of conscience. We can have hope of glory to come, and that God will receive us on the judgment day. And we believe it. At least, we ought to. This question we ask of do we believe it? Do we actually take it seriously? Many people don't, and they find it impossible to believe these things. "Well, there was never a Red Sea. And the plagues of Egypt are a bit of a story from somewhere. We don't believe these things, and we don't really believe in all this talk about resurrection and the rest of it." And we water it down. Tone it down. Rewrite the Bible to make it fit more

with our natural world and what we see happen in the here and the now. Are not to take the Bible seriously.

Well, that is not how we should proceed if want to get the reward of heaven. As Christians being convinced, we've been turned over in our expectations and in our assessments. We believe, actually, in that invisible world. We believe God's threatenings. There's a hell. There's a damnation to avoid. We've taken that seriously, and we believe very seriously that Jesus Christ saves from sin, gives us wonderful laws to obey, morality that is good for the soul, good for society, and follows it, theoretics and the ways of going about things that God has given to us for our good.

Well, my final heading really, carrying the burden of the title. That third heading is this, "Obedience Can Hurt." Obedience can hurt. In fact, to put it stronger, will hurt. That to obey God will hurt. Suffering losses, you see, to make gains, our main title this evening. And we just look there briefly at the end. Verse 25 when Moses had his great choice to make. He'd been in Pharaoh's household and brought up at Pharaoh's expense, and had lavished upon him all the best of Egyptian education, wisdom of Egypt, groomed for great things perhaps. Maybe he would Pharaoh one day. Not a totally unrealistic possibility there. And he is now at a mature age, not a youngster. An impetuous kind of choice, not some rash decision that he makes, but a very considered, very mature, carefully thought through decision, that he doesn't belong in Pharaoh's palace with all of its riches, all of its luxuries, with all of its prospects for his future. Prospects there, it may have even been promised, "You've got great things ahead of you, Moses." But he knows where he belongs. With his brethren. And they are slaves. And their prospects on the surface look pretty grim. Great Egyptian empire, and you're slaves within it. Well, normally, don't even entertain a hope. Yet Moses felt that he belonged with them, and indeed that the future belonged with them, and that future was all about the Messiah. It was all about the power and might of God and his preservation. It was all about that hope to go one day and leave that land, Joseph's bones traveling on with them.

What a choice he had to make. To choose to belong to these slave people or to stay in Pharaoh's household and enjoy the benefits, calling it that, of being the king's favorite, maybe. Luxury. All the sin and the pleasures of sin. Well, they are for a season. Sin has its pleasures there. And all of the things that he had within easy reach, things to satisfy his lusts, things to satisfy his greed, very powerful stuff, turns not a few people's heads. But he saw through it all. And he accounted it as worthless. He saw the prospect of being the king. Discounted it. The luxury. Discounted it. The wealth, the property, all the things his heart could have desired, and counted it as rubbish. He saw it as nothing, because he saw that actually his best interest was actually the slave people. These were God's people. These were the Hebrews. And with them there was a future that was so much more important, so much more vital. Having fellowship with God. Knowing this great God and going to the place that he promised, heaven itself. The reward of heaven, which actually made what you have on earth seem as nothing.

What was Pharaoh's palace when compared with the riches and the glory of heaven? Whoa! What cost it was. I meant actually to read in Exodus to a little further, but Moses

actually kills an Egyptian. And he sees manhandling in Hebrew. Murders him. Thinks his murder has been undiscovered, but no. Finds out from a fellow Hebrew, actually, that no, the Egyptians know all about this. Pharaoh learns of it, and so he is very angry and looks like he wants to kill Moses. That's a big cost. He's now completely alienated. Completely offended the people that at some expense to themselves have brought him up. "What's he doing?" You would say. "Is he turning his back on us? Are we not good enough for him? And joining these slave people? What is this man about? He's mad. He's gone mad. What's he making this kind of choice for? He's got it all on a plate here! And he's walked away from it. Worse than that, he's actually killed one of our own people to defend these wretched slaves! What a fool!" And Moses had to cap that, had to live with that, had to reckon on that. And he goes away from Egypt. He has to flee. He goes to the land of Midian and spends forty years there. Oh yes, they're not going to love you and love me for making the choice that we make. Obedience can hurt. For what we believe about this invisible God, and an invisible heaven, and of the benefits of living for the glory of this God. We'll learn the derision of the world there that counts us fools for doing it.

If I just turn a little ahead to the next book or two in the Bible, 1 Peter, we call it first letter of the apostle Peter. I'm just going to read a few verses from chapter 2 verses 20 to 23. We read there, "For what credit is it if," it's speaking to servants, "when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps 'Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth'; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously." And people account us fools, hateful people, bigoted people, because of the choices that we make. And they may threaten us, and they may revile us, so it falls upon us not to revile in return.

1 Peter 3:13-17. "And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed." He quotes, "'And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.' But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." And that is our calling.

Often the righteous, the ungodly, are filled with wrath. Their consciences, well actually, their consciences are a bit troubled by us and what we believe, and they all, somewhere, they all believe somewhere in judgment to come. They push that away rather than listen to their conscience. They fight back and just show anger against the Lord and against his people. Oh yeah, we suffer losses, but we make gains, because, of course, as Moses foresaw the day of Christ, realized that there was a great future, eternal life, heaven. And so, what was Pharaoh's palace concerned with that? Well, we may not have to forsake luxury like that. We may not have a stately home that comes under threat because of our

Christian convictions, no. But there will be other things, and they're painful things. And each of us have to make those choices, don't we? Those choices make total sense if we're persuaded about heaven, and its glory, and its beauty, and its joy, and its holiness. So, yes, suffering losses to make gains. But in the end, those gains make the losses look as nothing.