

A Greater Reward

JESUS IS GREATER #21 - Pastor Gary Combs - October 19, 2025 - Hebrews 11:23-40

INTRO: Good morning church! We're continuing with Part 3 of our series that we began back in the Fall of 2023. It's entitled, "JESUS IS GREATER: An Exposition of Hebrews." Our theme verse is:

Hebrews 1:4 (NLT) This shows that the Son is far **greater than** the angels, just as the name God gave him is **greater than** their names.

Today's message is entitled: **A GREATER REWARD**. Because Christ Jesus is our surpassing great reward!

Speaking of rewards, have you ever received one? Through the years, I've accumulated several... little league baseball trophies, academic certificates and diplomas, and in my corporate days: letters of commendation from upper management and even the president of Eckerd Drugs (which I framed on my office wall back in the day), plaques and service pins (most of these are now in a shoe box in an upstairs closet). These rewards felt great for a moment, but they soon lost their impact.

Need: We live in a world that constantly bombards us with offers for immediate gratification—fleeting pleasures, temporary treasures, and the shallow status that money and influence can buy. These things distract us and actually weigh us down. For they only last for a moment and they never really satisfy.

Trans: That's the tension we're going to see in today's Scripture. For the OT people of God had to choose between seeking worldly pleasure or by faith, seeking the greater reward of Christ.

BODY: In the book of Hebrews, the author encouraged Jewish background believers by reminding them how the saints of old faithfully looked beyond worldly success and suffering to the greater reward God promised and fulfilled in Christ Jesus. We can faithfully look beyond this life to the greater reward we have in Christ Jesus. How can we faithfully look beyond this life to the greater reward we have in Christ Jesus? The text gives **three ways** we can faithfully look to our greater reward in Christ Jesus.

Read text: Hebrews 11:23-40 (ESV) ²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them. ²⁹ By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. ³² And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

WE CAN FAITHFULLY LOOK TO OUR GREAT REWARD IN CHRIST...

1. By treasuring Christ over worldly pleasures.

EXP: (23-28) The writer of Hebrews now moves from the Patriarchs to Moses and the prophets. Notice v.26, "he considered," which might also be translated, "esteemed, counted, valued," or treasured. Moses would rather be identified with "the people of God" (25) and the "reproach of Christ" (26) than the pleasures and treasures available to him as a prince of Egypt.

"Faith" (8; 9x) (πίστις, *pistis*) - conviction of the truth of anything, belief.

"Moses" (23) (Μωϋσῆς, *mōusēs*) - "drawing out." Moses: Prince of Egypt, Shepherd, and Lawgiver.

"Not afraid" (23) (φοβέω, *phobeō*) - Moses' parents valued his life over their fear.

"Son of Pharaoh's daughter" (24) - He was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter (Ex. 2:1-10).

"Choosing rather to be mistreated" (25) (συγκακουχέομαι, *sugkakoucheomai*) - "to suffer affliction with."

"Enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin" (25) (ἀπόλαυσις, *apolausis*) - full enjoyment (with pleasures)

"Reproach of Christ" (26) (ὀνειδισμός, *oneidismos*) - reproach; shame, disgrace, contempt, scorn. Moses treasured the Anointed One so much that he considered experiencing reproach as worth it. Moses knew of the coming Messiah (Christ) and wrote of Him, as Jesus said:

John 5:46 (ESV) For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.

Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV) The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen.

A Greater Reward

JESUS IS GREATER #21 - Pastor Gary Combs - October 19, 2025 - Hebrews 11:23-40

“Not being afraid of the anger of the king” (27) - Moses “was afraid” (Ex.2:14) when he first fled Egypt alone, but when he led the people of Israel out later, he left boldly (Ex. 12-14).

“Endured as seeing him who is invisible” (27) (ἀόρατος, *aoratos*) - “unseen, invisible.” Moses had his eyes set on the invisible God. Remember the definition of faith:

Hebrews 11:1 (ESV) Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things **not seen**.

“Kept the Passover” (28) - Shows how OT faith—even in the face of imminent, invisible catastrophe—was demonstrated through obedience to a bloody sacrifice, which finds its fulfillment in the sacrifice of Jesus.

ARG: Remember what the Lord told Abraham:

Genesis 15:1 (NKJV) After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”

The Apostle Paul had a heart that truly treasured Christ!

Philippians 3:8-9 (ESV) ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith

ILL: Missionary Jim Elliot once wrote in his journal, **“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”** He and his fellow missionaries gave their lives in the Amazon rainforest region of eastern Ecuador, trying to reach the Auca tribe with the gospel, never seeing the earthly results. Yet their sacrifice led to a revival that reached the very tribe that killed them. Like Moses, Elliot looked beyond the fleeting pleasures of this world to the eternal reward of Christ. (Give Me Jesus)

APP: Can you identify one area in your life where you are chasing a “fleeting pleasure of sin” (25)—perhaps it’s a financial idol, an unhealthy entertainment habit, or a status you crave. As John Piper states **“Every sin flows from the failure to treasure the glory of God above all things.”** We commit sin because we briefly find a greater, though fleeting, pleasure in something other than Christ. By faith, are you willing to take one deliberate action to devalue that temporary pleasure in favor of treasuring your relationship with Christ?

2. By trusting Christ in the face of overwhelming obstacles.

EXP: (29-31) Now we move to the people of God at the beginning and the end of their Wilderness journey. By faith, they crossed the uncrossable and conquered the unconquerable.

“Crossed the Red Sea” (29) - (Ex. 14) The people of God crossed on dry land.

“The walls of Jericho” (30) - Now under Joshua’s leadership and the 1st big battle in the promised land ... one of the first indicators that God would be with them still under Joshua (Josh. 6)

“Rahab the prostitute” (31) - She believed God was with the Israelites and helped the spies that Joshua sent (Joshua 2:9 (ESV) “I know that the Lord has given you the land”). She’s in Christ’s lineage (Matt. 1:5).

ARG: Faith isn’t blind optimism, it’s trust in the Person of Jesus Christ!

Philippians 4:13 (NKJV) I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

ILL: Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, once said, **“There are three stages in any great work of God: first it is impossible, then it is difficult, then it is done.”** Like Israel before the Red Sea, God’s people often face “impossible” moments—but faith in Christ turns the impossible into testimony.

APP: What overwhelming obstacle in your life are you currently relying on your own strength to conquer? True trust means looking at that obstacle—that financial mountain, that relationship wall, that deeply ingrained sin—and choosing to transfer the weight from your strength to His. How big, how great is your view of Christ? Is your view of Him greater than any overwhelming obstacle you face?

A Greater Reward

JESUS IS GREATER #21 - Pastor Gary Combs - October 19, 2025 - Hebrews 11:23-40

3. By testifying of Christ in times of triumph and trial.

EXP: (32-40) Now the author gives us a rapid-fire list of heroes, deliberately balancing the stories of deliverance (triumph) with the stories of endurance (trial). Faith is required in both:

“Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophet” (32) - Judges, kings, prophets are somewhat randomly listed here as having faith in victory and in suffering.

“Conquered kingdoms” (33) - Likely refers to **Joshua** (conquering Canaan; Josh. 6–12), the **Judges** (Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah), and **David** (2 Sam. 5–10). All won military victories by faith.

“Enforced justice” (33) - Leaders and kings who ruled righteously — **David, Samuel**, (2 Sam. 8:15).

“Obtained promises” (33) - Partial fulfillments, but not the ultimate fulfillment in Christ (v. 39–40).

“Stopped the mouths of lions” (33) - Refers to **Daniel** (Dan. 6:16–23), in the lions’ den.

“Quenched the power of fire” (34) - Refers to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan. 3:16–27).

“Escaped ... the sword” (34) - **David** escaping Saul (1 Sam. 19), **Elijah** fleeing Jezebel (1 Kgs. 19:1–3).

“Were made strong out of weakness” (34) - Refers to those who were physically weak but empowered.

“Mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight” (34) - Gideon (Judg. 7), Barak (Judg. 4), David (2 Sam. 8).

“Women received back their dead by resurrection.” (35) - Widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs. 17) whose son Elijah raised, and the Shunammite woman (2 Kgs. 4:18–37) whose son Elisha raised.

“Tortured, refusing to accept release” - Jewish martyrs during the Maccabean period, such as Eleazar and the seven brothers who were tortured by Antiochus IV but refused to renounce their faith.

“Better life.” (35, 40 - 2x) (κρείττων ἀνάστασις, *kreittōn anastasis*) - Lit., “better resurrection.”

“Suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment” (36) - Refers to prophets like Jeremiah (Jer. 20:2; 37:15–16) and Micaiah (1 Kgs. 22:24–27), who were beaten and imprisoned.

“They were stoned” (37) - Zechariah (2 Chr. 24), who was stoned in the temple court.

“Sawn in two” (37) - Ancient Jewish tradition says the prophet Isaiah was sawn in two by King Manasseh.

“Killed with the sword” (37) - Refers to prophets slain by wicked kings (1 Kgs. 19:10)

“They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated” (37) - Describes prophets like Elijah who lived in poverty and simplicity for God’s sake.

“World was not worthy” (38) - The world rejected these saints, but heaven esteemed them highly.

“Wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (38) - Refers to David hiding from Saul (1 Sam. 22:1; 23:14), Elijah hiding from Ahab (1 Kgs. 17:3), and many others.

“All these ... did not receive what was promised” (39) - this is a summary of the whole chapter.

“Something better for us” (40) - What is this better thing? In short, it is Christ Himself and the eternal inheritance and full glorification that He accomplished and now shares with all who have faith, linking the faithful across all ages into one perfected, complete body.

“Made perfect” (40) (τελειόω, *teleioō*) - “to finish or complete.” God reserved the ultimate perfection until Christ came and established the New Covenant, and until the full body of believers is complete.

ARG: **God causes all things to work together for the good of His people according to His purpose.**

Romans 8:28-30 (NLT) And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

ILL: At the cross of Christ we see both His trial (“My God, My God...”) and His triumph (“It is finished!”)

APP: Where is Christ calling you to testify today? Our testimony is often loudest not in the moment of our triumph, but in the silence of our steadfast suffering. Look beyond your circumstances, in all their ups and downs, and testify to the reality of the unseen Christ.

A Greater Reward

JESUS IS GREATER #21 - Pastor Gary Combs - October 19, 2025 - Hebrews 11:23-40

CONCLUSION: The saints of Hebrews 11 remind us that faith always looks beyond this life to the greater reward we have in Christ. They believed God's promises without receiving their full fulfillment, yet they kept treasuring, trusting and testifying of the greater reward we have in Christ Jesus!

It reminds me of an old hymn that I used to hear George Beverly Shea sing at Billy Graham crusades:

I'D RATHER HAVE JESUS

1 I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands.
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand

2 I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause;
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause;
I'd rather have Jesus than world-wide fame.
I'd rather be true to His holy name [Refrain]

Refrain:

Than to be the king of a vast domain
or be held in sin's dread sway.
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
this world affords today.

3 He's fairer than lilies of rarest bloom'
He's sweeter than honey from out the comb;
He's all that my hungering spirit needs.
I'd rather have Jesus and let Him lead [Refrain]

Let's pray.