

Blaze of Glory

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[0 : 0 0] All right, our text for today is Hebrews chapter 11, and we're going to be on verse 29. So Audrey will read, I want to use that one, verse 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. Thank you. All right, you can also, if you want, you can put a finger in Exodus chapter 14, we'll be there, and then we'll also bounce around a few other spots today, but we'll be mostly in Exodus 14.

So there's a quote I like, turn it and turn it, for everything is in it. Reflect on it and grow old and gray with it. Don't turn from it, for nothing is better than it.

And just as a bonus, that guy's name is super fun if you're a kid. Even if you're an adult, it's pretty fun too. So these are the words of a first century rabbi about the Hebrew scriptures, which is what we call the Old Testament.

And I think that the writer of the Hebrews held a similar view. He shows that the good news of Jesus, the gospel, is a diamond that we can turn over. And in every finely polished facet, we find that the events and the prophecies in the Hebrew scriptures find their true and better fulfillment in Jesus, who's the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

[1 : 4 2] Turn it and turn it, for everything is in it. Reflect on it and grow old and gray with it. So by faith, the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land.

But the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. Now I don't know a lot about grammar, but I was raised on Schoolhouse Rock.

So I know a conjunction when I see one. The phrase, but the Egyptians, that's a conjunction.

It's a coordinating conjunction that connects two ideas that contrast. So it brings our attention to consider the differences between the Israelites and the Egyptians.

So God has providentially led both camps into the same trial. The Israelites are fleeing Egypt after the 10th plague, and the Egyptians are in pursuit close behind.

[2 : 4 0] They will both enter into the separated waters of the sea, but the outcomes will be vastly different. The Israelites were able to walk across on dry land, but the Egyptians were drowned.

Literally, that word means swallowed up. So what are the differences between the two groups? I think the most obvious difference is the steady heartbeat of Hebrews chapter 11.

It's the by faith. And the second difference is related to the first. It's actually the conclusion. One made it safely across, and one group was drowned.

So if you've read the Exodus story, do you guys get the feeling that the Israelites are shining examples of faith? So let's look in Exodus 14.

We'll kind of get up to speed with what's going on. We'll start in chapter 14, verse 10. We'll make our way down through there. It says, When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly.

[3 : 52] And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord. So we're off to a good start. They're worried, and they turn to God in their time of need. Now it's Moses' turn.

He's going to talk. Continuing on, They said to Moses, Oh no, these are the Egyptians, or the Israelites. Sorry. I'm getting ahead of myself. They said to Moses, Does this sound like the language of faith?

So Moses then reassures them of God's sovereignty, and that God will bring them safely through this trial. So Moses said to the people, He said, Fear not.

Stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.

The Lord said to Moses, Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. And God's response is direct and to the point.

[5 : 16] He says, What are you guys doing? Let's go. What's going on? I have to make a timeout right now. I'm going to insert something and go rogue from our planned.

I just want to put an idea to you guys, so that we can keep it in the back of our head. That line that the Lord says to Moses, He says, Why do you cry to me?

Tell the people of Israel to go forward. A lot of times, I fall into thinking about the Exodus as going. They're going, they're going, they're going. But we have to also, it's like twofold, we have to also think where they're going to.

So God is actually calling them to himself. Does that make sense, kids? Elam, you tracking? So it's like twofold.

God is with them, but they're also going to him, towards him. Right? He's calling them to his presence. So that was the timeout.

[6 : 19] We might use another timeout later, just to do some clock management, as the time is running out. We'll see. So time back in.

All right? Are you encouraged by the faith that the Israelites are showing right now? It's not much.

I want to be clear here that I'm not arguing that they don't have faith in God. Scripture is divinely inspired and fully reliable, and it does say it in Hebrews that they do have faith.

So they clearly do have faith, but it's certainly not a big and mature and fully developed faith that we would expect to see lifted up as a witness for us to follow as believers.

And if that's true, then what is the author of Hebrews trying to round out and add to our understanding and our definition of faith?

[7 : 18] So now we'll talk about winter. So one reality of living in North Dakota is that when the weather starts to cool off in the fall, it inevitably transitions to the next season, which is winter.

And it's not a Hallmark movie, put on a flannel shirt and throw fluffy snowballs kind of winter. Nope. It's winter in all its glory.

Cold. Snow. Wind. Colder. Snowier. Windier. More colder.

Blizzard-y. And then gulp. Coldest. Some of you are smiling because you like winter and the other are smiling because you're nervous.

It's okay. We'll layer up. We'll make it through. So the lakes and rivers cool down and eventually what happens? Owen, what happens when winter comes to the water?

[8 : 23] It freezes. Slowly a sheet of ice starts to form on the surface of the water and begin to thicken. And every winter when this starts to happen, you'll see ice warnings put out by the DNR and you'll see news articles and on the evening news, you'll see them warning you about the dangers of walking on thin ice.

And here's what I think we can learn. The object of your faith is more important than the maturity of your faith. Or, if we phrase it a little differently, the object matters more than your level of trust in that object.

You will observe each year that some overly confident ice fishing enthusiasts have a big, confident faith that even a dangerously thin amount of ice will hold them up and support them safely.

They may have much faith, but the object of that faith, the ice, is lacking. And you may also observe someone who, no matter the thickness of the ice and quality, will never, never step foot on the ice for fear that it'll suddenly give way.

So you guys tracking with me? Do you see that the quality of the ice is the thing that matters, not the level of their faith? So we are created to be people of faith.

[9 : 47] You will believe in something, and that something is what I'm calling the object of your faith. We need to be careful that the object of our faith is something, or rather someone, who's completely reliable, unchangeable, just, faithful, gracious, infinite, loving, holy, and merciful.

And if you aren't tracking with me already, I'll spell it out. It's God. God. That's the object of our faith. As Christians, the triune God is the object of our faith.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So back to Exodus. One of the great things about the book of Exodus is that God tells us exactly what he's doing and what he's up to and why.

We don't have to wonder or guess. And so here at the Red Sea Crossing, God reminds us again, in case we forgot, what his purposes are, Exodus 14, 4 says, and I will harden Pharaoh's heart and he will pursue them and I will get glory over Pharaoh and his host and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord.

So number one, God will get glory over Pharaoh. He says that. And number two, the Egyptians are going to find out who God is and they're going to find out that they're in subjection to his will.

[11 : 15] Glory and sovereignty are two of the main themes throughout the whole book of Exodus. And glory is a word we use a lot in church.

Alice, have you ever used glory in any place that's not church? No? Anybody else?

Glory? Day-to-day lives? How? It was a glorious play. Tom Brady has a lot of glory with all the rain. I don't know, that sort of thing.

Glory. I don't know. I slipped it in earlier. I said we get winter in all its glory. If you use glorious, I think we use the word more often, but if you just stick with glory, I don't know.

This is a challenge. Think of that this week. Might be an icebreaker question. So I want to look at that word. And so the word, the word is kavod in Hebrew.

[12 : 18] And it has a couple different ways that it can be used just like in English. So the first way it can be used is just literal heaviness or weight. So if I go to the doctor and they say, just step on this scale, they're going to get an idea of my weightiness, right?

And if I go to Sandy's too much and start eating a lot of donuts, they may say, hey, lay off some of the donuts, man.

You're getting mighty glorious over there. Number two, the second way, it's not as fun, but the second way it can be used is metaphorically, right?

Something can be heavy or have a lot of gravity and you might start a sentence with something like this. You can say, with heavy hearts, right? You've probably heard that, but that doesn't mean that your heart actually increased in weight.

It's just a metaphor. That's a way it can be used. And three, that's going to be our most important way that I want us to understand how this word is used and it's reputation or importance.

[13 : 29] Somebody's kavod, their glory or weightiness relates to their reputation or their importance. And so, if we want to continue to think about winter because it's relatively nice and we're people of Fargo, so part of the kavod or the glory of Fargo for better or worse is winter.

If you talk to anybody that's not from here, that's one of the first questions you're going to get. They're going to say, how cold is it today? Especially if it's February. And then you can tell them and then they'll say, wow, I didn't even know it gets below zero.

Yeah, it does. So, so those are the three ways that it's used. And the idea of God's glory, so glory as it relates to God, it's too big for us to unpack today.

But for today, there's three categories or ways that I want to look at this. And I nick these from Lifeways 99 Essential Doctrines just because it's a lot more concise than I could come up with.

So we'll use them. So what God does contributes to his glory. And these are his actions in the world. It's his mercy and his grace towards us and his kindness, but also his judgment.

[14 : 51] What he does contributes to his weightiness, his reputation, his glory. Secondly, what God does and how he acts reveals his glory to us.

So, what he chooses, what he chooses to express to us declares something of him and contributes to his reputation.

Psalm 96 says, declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the people. So, that's his reputation is being declared in that psalm.

Oh no, that's my example from one. That's what he does. Sorry guys, I don't know how to read today. So that's one. Number two is his reputation.

What was I thinking? Now we're here on two. So, his reputation is what we know about God from what he has chosen to reveal to us. It tells us something about who he is.

[15 : 52] So, Psalm 102 is a good example of that. It says, nations will fear the name of the Lord and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory.

So, his reputation, that's what it's talking about there, unlike the last one which was talking about what he does. Thirdly, three, the beauty of his being.

God's attributes and characteristics are on display all around us in his creation. So, Psalm 19 says, the heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours out speech and night to night reveals knowledge. So, all three of these ways that God's glory is revealed, they interact and they work together.

You can't really separate them and only have one, but it helps us kind of get our hands around what the glory of God is. And so now, you might be thinking we've been talking about glory for too much and we'd like to get back to the drowning people part because that seems like more fun.

[17 : 00] And you're right and we will, but we have one more stop. We gotta look at how God's glory connects with us and how we interact with that.

So, we were made to participate in and display God's glory. And I wanna look at Psalm 8. I think that's gonna help us make this turn between God's glory and how we participate in it and how that's gonna connect to faith later on.

So, in Psalm 8, David is reflecting on God's goodness in creating and commissioning Adam and Eve from Genesis 1. And it's both a display of God's glory, right?

It's things that he does. It's ways that he works. It's his beauty and creation. And it's also an invitation to join into it. So, starting in verse 4, it says, what is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands.

[18 : 13] You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea.

So, did you see in verse 5 there, David says that humanity was given a crown of glory and honor. So, when God commissioned us, he put us to work, to take care of, to steward what God created.

David says, you have given him dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet. And then, when commissioned, we were crowned with this crown of glory.

Not that we ourselves would have our own glory, but so that God would receive glory from and through us. So, it's like wearing a high school football jersey.

Not a professional one where their name's on the back. They're representing not themselves. You're wearing the image of something other than yourself and you're contributing to a reputation that is so much bigger than yourself.

[19 : 22] when we bear the name of the Lord as faithful believers and act in a way that stewards and cares stewards and cares for creation in the way that God does, then we act in some of the ways that God acts.

And so, we are participants in his glory, his kavod, his weightiness. And this, brothers and sisters, is your calling as a believer.

You are called to contribute to the glory of God to magnify his great name. We were made to participate in and display God's glory.

And that's why he chose to partner with us for that specific end and purpose. So, when we act in faith, this is how we're connecting this, when we act in faith, we do the work that God does.

We are participating in his glory in some of the ways that God himself brings glory to himself. So, I want to look at the same slide and we're going to go three, two, one, because I'm a Bible nerd and that's what a chiasm does.

[20 : 32] Works in and then it works back out. So, we're going to work backwards now. So, these are ways that we can do some of the communicable things in some of the ways that God acts.

This is how we also act so that God receives glory from our faith and our actions. So, we display the beauty of his being just by being a part of creation, just by being a human, you display the majesty of God's handiwork.

Two, is his reputation. God's reputation receives glory from us when we bear or represent the name of God according to his commands and will.

And number one, when we do what God has called us to, we are participating in the things that God does. In small and imperfect ways, our actions are matching and supporting God's work right here and right now.

And then up to the title or the heading, God receives glory through our actions in faith. He is who he says he is.

[21 : 43] That's his holy name. That's what our actions in faith point to. They point towards him, towards his name. And so, while the people of Israel don't demonstrate a big and mature and fully developed faith, they do have genuine faith.

They're looking back at the actions and promises of God in the past and taking a step forward, believing that God is who he says he is. God receives glory when you take a step towards him in faith.

The object of their faith is far more important than the maturity of their faith. God is glorified even when their faith is small. Like electricity, God's glory issues out from him in a number of different ways and humans respond in faith which reflects that glory back to God and it connects and completes the circuit.

But sin short circuits God's good design for glory and then it becomes dangerous. That's why Paul can say in Romans in chapter 3 verse 23 he says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

We all know that we have fallen short but what have we fallen short of? When we sin we are not living up to what God has intended for us. We are actually building up glory for ourselves and not looking to ascribe it to the Lord as we should.

[23 : 21] We are short circuiting the intended flow of glory back to God. We are attempting to build up our own reputation instead of God's. It was God's will to grow the family of Israel in Egypt for his glory.

And right from the first chapter Pharaoh saw this family grow and out of fear for his own kingdom being taken away from him by the growing family he began to take actions to continue to keep his glory his kavod his reputation his influence and power.

The more oppression the family of Israel experienced the more they flourished. But so also did Pharaoh's glory. His reign and reputation was increasing and growing and that was in large part to the building projects that the Israelites were forced to do.

But God sees and knows what's happening. He sees that Pharaoh is oppressing the Israelites and using him for his own glory but he also needs to limit their strength so they don't end up overpowering the Egyptians.

Can you see that this is now a struggle for glory between Pharaoh and God? So I want to remind you of the beginning of the Exodus story.

[24 : 38] In chapter 1 verse 22 Pharaoh commands all his people he says every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile but you shall let every daughter live.

Narrator voice be careful what you ask for. A few weeks ago Jeremy pointed out from Exodus 3 that God tells Moses that he has seen them and he knows their suffering.

He tells Moses that he will deliver them from the hand of Pharaoh and that he will be with them. Exodus 3.25 says God saw the people of Israel and God knew.

So God would delay his judgment but he wouldn't delay it indefinitely. At the crossing of the Red Sea God would finally deal justly with Pharaoh and Egypt.

So now we've worked ourselves up to the part with the people in the sea the exciting climactic portion. It says by faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land but the Egyptians when they attempted to do the same were drowned.

[25 : 49] So German commentator Johann Bangle the dude not the tiger if you were wondering Owen he said this he said rashness and presumption are mistaken by many for faith with similar rash presumption many rush into eternity the same thing when done by the believer and when done by the unbeliever is not the same thing what was faith in Israel was presumption in the Egyptians I thought that was really well put and fairly sobering there are two things that I've noticed as a pattern when we see God's judgment carried out and one is that the judgment corresponds to the cause and what I mean by that is when people sin they are given over to the consequences of their own actions and two it's never rushed

God's patience and forbearance is a mercy and he allows sufficient not always a lot but sufficient time to repent and turn from sin so Pharaoh's presumption is that because things were going pretty well for himself they would continue that way and even if you aren't the king of Egypt it's pretty common for us to wrongly believe that too in reality though he's walking out onto pretty thin ice because unlike Israel his faith isn't in God it's in his empire his power his horses his chariots his horsemen his army and himself so do you guys remember what he asked for in 122 he wanted all the sons of the Israelites thrown into the Nile river a watery grave and that was around 80 years earlier that's 80 years of God's mercy to not deliver justice that's 80 years of mistreatment and abuse to his people in bondage and that's 80 years of presumption instead of repentance that's sufficient time to repent

Pharaoh wanted every son born to the Hebrews to be cast into the waters but what he wasn't expecting is that God would do it and not only would they go into the waters but they would go in willingly and God will get glory so it doesn't depend on the righteousness of the Israelites it depends solely on the mercy of God God would lead his people into the waters of death that Pharaoh wanted but he would also bring them safely through but not the Egyptians the thin ice Pharaoh was walking on would dramatically collapse under the weight of glory that he was trying to carry right here as the Egyptians are crossing let's look at Exodus 14 verses 24 and 25 it says and in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily you see the word heavily anybody have any guess what that word is oh can you say it kavod that's a fun one because you can turn an

H sound into a K just surprise it with the K okay never mind so yeah it's kavod God handed them over to Pharaoh's desire for personal glory so that the judgment corresponds to the cause there that that glory is what was clogging their wheels and bogging them down and so in the words of John Bon Jovi he says this is where they made their final stand and they went down in a blaze of glory so the judgment corresponds that was way too much fun the judgment corresponds to the cause Pharaoh was given exactly what he wanted and that's the second difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians the conclusion is different because of the object of their faith neither were blameless but one trusted in God and the other in themselves and in both cases who gets the glory from our place in history we get to look back and we can see how even though the faith of the Israelites was not big it was not mature it was genuine though nonetheless they stepped out into the sea with their faith resting on the object of their faith

God and not themselves we can see that there is a coming judgment for those who will never place their faith in God and finally we can see that like Jeremy unpacked for us last week from Romans 9 God will ultimately receive glory from both those that choose to trust in him and also those that don't but let's not just rush to talking about the deliverance of the Israelites we should linger for a little bit and feel the weightiness of this situation the kavod we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God we've all short circuited that loop and not returned that glory to God in what areas of our lives are we stockpiling glory for ourselves instead of ascribing it to God how do you feel weighed down right now can I remind you that God's patience and forbearance is a mercy please let

[32 : 12] God's kindness lead you to repentance go to Jesus repent and leave your burden there if you have not put your faith and trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior please don't make the mistake the Egyptians did don't presume upon the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance don't like our tiger last named friend bangle wrote don't rush into eternity with rash presumption so I'm a little disappointed that Josh isn't here today because he requested more rap lyrics and I'm a man of the people I want to give him what he wants and so in the words of Thomas Jefferson at least the Broadway Hamilton version he says every action has its equal opposite reactions

I can't because I'm very white but it's in there so when God acts in judgment there also is a corresponding act of deliverance the Israelites acted in faith by following God through the wilderness to the edge of the sea and they acted in faith by stepping out into the sea trusting that God will fulfill his promises to deliver them they were brought out to a place where no amount of human effort would be able to save them and it was then when God acted!

that their salvation could not be attributed to anything turn it and turn it for everything is in it reflect on it grow old and gray with it don't turn from it for nothing is better than it please friends look to Jesus Jesus is the true and better fulfillment of the Red Sea Crossing he's the true and better Israel he also stepped into the sea but not of water of death of death he entered into suffering and death on a cross he was buried and gloriously resurrected he came up out of death alive Jesus like the pillar in the cloud he went before us so that we too could pass through death to newness of life Jesus goes behind you not as the pillar and cloud but as the good shepherd ensuring that all that are given to him all those who bear his name will not be lost

Jesus holds all things together he is right now mercifully holding back the waters of judgment from swallowing us up we are upheld by the sturdiness and sufficiency of the object of our faith Jesus he is the radiance of the glory of God the exact imprint!

of his nature do you have a big mature fully developed faith or like me does it feel a little touch and go some days some days are good confident in God's promises no matter what bring it on and other days doubts creep in and I wonder can God bring me through this I would encourage you to look around the room these are the people that have chosen to stand at the edge of the sea with you to support and encourage you brothers and sisters it's okay to doubt please remember the object of your faith is more important than the maturity of your faith remember what God has done that he is both glorious and sovereign remember that Jesus is the object of your faith and he!

[36 : 16] will appear again to save those who are eagerly waiting for him faith takes a step towards Jesus would you guys pray with me dear lord we thank you for all that you've done for entering into suffering and crossing through death into life lord we know that as the true and better Jesus not only did you fulfill all the promises of the old testament but unlike us you didn't have to you were sinless and you chose to enter in not for your own benefit but for ours lord i just thank you for drawing sinners like me to you for changing our hearts transforming our lives lord i just thank you for having scripture in our own language that we can read it that we can hear from you that we can learn from you lord i pray that you just would continue to draw us near to you especially in time of need when there is no way that we can do anything to contribute lord that's when you act that's when your grace is and your mercy!

on full display lord as we transition to this time of communion i just pray that each of us takes a little time to reflect and kind of take an inventory of how we're doing where we're at with faith lord we know that taking a step in faith towards you will result in your glory and lord i just pray that in your name amen