

Kenny Moorner - The Endurance of Faith

"Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to the till death." Ging to talk this morning about being true to God till we die. It's not always easy. As a matter of fact, it's generally hard. But I wanted to talk about that today as we think about this idea of the endurance of faith. I want you to open your Bibles this morning to Mark the ninth chapter, we're going to look at just a couple of things from a story that we have in mark the ninth chapter. I want to begin reading in verse 17. And if you have your Bibles, follow along, you can also look up here. I'll have it on the chart on the screen behind me as well. But this is an interesting story. And I started with this story this morning, because we're going to talk about as I said, the endurance of faith. I appreciate the fact that this morning, Brett led many songs that had to do with the idea of faith. Hopefully you caught wind of that or caught sight of that as you were singing the songs this morning. And I appreciate him doing that. But we're going to talk about this idea of enduring faith this morning. Let's begin by reading in verse 17. "Then one of the crowd answered and said, Teacher, I brought you my son who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down. He foams at the mouth, gnashing his teeth and becomes rigid. So, I spoke to your disciples that they should cast it out, but they could not. He answered him and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me. And then they brought him to him. And when he saw him, immediately the Spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed foaming at the mouth. So, he asked his father, how long has this been happening to him? He said, from childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. And Jesus said to him, if you can believe all things are possible to him who believes. And immediately the father of the child cried out and said, with tears, Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief."

As I said to you earlier, I think this is a good place to start on a lesson on enduring faith because a lot of people in this story have faith issues. This story is about a man coming to Jesus disciples. It seems having looked for Jesus first. But Jesus, having been on the Mount of Transfiguration, this man goes to Jesus disciples with a son who has symptoms of what we might call epileptic symptoms, but he's demon possessed. The disciples, as I said, we're given the first opportunity to heal this man's son, but they could not. And verse 18 tells us that after a specific explanation about what happens to his son, the father said that the disciples couldn't heal him. And then Jesus expresses in verse 19, the frustration - he calls the generation of faithless generation. And it seems he's not talking about the man unnecessarily. It seems like he's talking, to me, about the disciples. And then later in verse 28 and 29, that I don't have on the screen, the disciples asked Jesus, why they couldn't heal the boy. And Jesus tells the disciples because it takes prayer and fasting, this is not your normal case in other words. This is going to take something more for this spirit, this demon, to be taken out and exercised out of this boy. And they didn't understand that. But to some degree, the disciple's faith was weak and incapable. And so, when you go back to verse 22, the father apparently begins to lose faith too. Verse 22, in the New King James says, "often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him." This is a violent demon, who sought to do this to the boy. And then the man says, "but if you can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Your translation may render that differently than what my translation that I'm using, this New King James, renders it. One translation says, "If you can," and the

punctuation after that is a question mark. "If you can," as if to say Jesus, if you can heal the boy. Or it may be that he's telling the father, if you can have the kind of faith that you need to have, then please have that faith because Jesus goes on to say all things are possible with God. You may not think it, but God can do anything. And certainly, we know that the boy was healed. Matter of fact, verse 25, says Jesus commanded. This is not a lesson about demon possession. But it seems clear to me that demon possession was alive and well in the first century for one primary reason. So that people could see that demons can be cast out of animals and of people to show the power of God. And certainly, that is on display here in Mark the ninth chapter. This is a violent exorcism; it is a complete exorcism. And this is really not about demon possession. What this story is really about faith. It's really about having belief or not having belief or what we commonly call unbelief. It's about having a mature faith that Jesus wants us to have that endures for the rest of our life. Now, there's the catch, you see. The catch is for you to have the kind of faith that Jesus wants you to have, and for me to have the kind of faith that Jesus wants me to have, all my life. And what this text tells us is that even the disciples had faith issues.

You know, one of the great things about the Bible is that it doesn't hide anything. Even the great people who are talked about in Scripture, that the great men of God, or the great men and women of faith, even those people had problems. They had faith issues, but it gives me great hope. I'm telling you. I think about David a lot man. The King David and who he was and the significance of who King David was, throughout all his life. that's impressive to me, because God forgave him. And God was willing to forgive him, and God approved of the kind of faith that he had in him, even though he wasn't everything he needed to be, certainly, on many occasions.

There are times in our lives, and this is kind of the crux of what I want to say to you this morning. There are times when our faith struggles. I want to talk to you for just a few minutes about that. I find myself, and you may be sitting there going, "we've got another one of the 'when my faith struggles' sermons." You're going to get more, and the reason is, is because I think there are times in my life when my faith tends to show struggle. And I think sometimes we struggle, unapologetically, to have faith in God without caveats. Without ifs, and without buts. And what I mean by that is we have faith until a situation arises in our life that's not exactly what we want it to be. Or maybe it's more than not exactly, maybe it's nothing like we want it to be. Maybe it's a situation that we never even expected. And then we have difficulty. And what Jesus is saying, I think, to not only his disciples, but this to this man is: you need to always have faith. And that's hard. Always having faith is hard. And I think he wants this enduring faith to be something that we want, as well. Our generation has similar problems. I want to ask you a question. Have you ever said to God, "I have faith to help my unbelief." You ever said that? Lord, I have faith. I'm not doubting you. I'm not doubting what you've done in my life. I'm not doubting what you're doing in my life. I'm not doubting what you can do in my life but help my unbelief. I think there's not one of us in this audience this morning, who couldn't raise our hands say that you're talking about me, Kenny. No, I'm talking about me. Help my unbelief. Think about how we operate with our faith sometimes. We're good at preaching and teaching and stating and talking about the fact that the Age of Miracles and the age of supernatural things is over. And I believe that. Certainly, the age of miracles and supernatural things, as we read about in the New Testament, certainly those days are over because there's no need for those things anymore. In the last days, the Hebrew writer tells us, that God has spoken to us through His Son. What God has given in His Word by his own son, and those who were authorized to say what the son wanted them to say God has given that to us. So, those days are

over when miracles and supernatural gifts have been given. But on the flip side, it may be that all our explanations about what God no longer does, has caused us to move in a direction that might make us think that God doesn't do anything. You see where I'm going with that. But God doesn't work that way anymore. And I'm agreeing with that. I think the Bible clearly teaches that the Age of Miracles, as we read about in Scripture, those are over. And the need for the supernatural spiritual gifts are over there as well. But if we're not careful, the fact that we say that may weaken our faith. And because of that, we may not expect God to act on our behalf today, or at least he doesn't that much for us. And I realize that there are some nuances with that, because we can't know. You've heard me deliver lessons about God and how He works in our life and how we can't know exactly how God works in our life. That's not the same thing as if He doesn't work, not anywhere close to the same thing. It's clear that He works. We just simply do not know how. But Jesus is not done. God's not done acting in the world. Yet. We know that. Jesus said, I will come back.

Second Peter three is a chapter that deals with the fact that that Peter said, God's going to come back. God's going to do what he says. And the scoffers looked at Peter and others and said, Where's your promise of His coming? Everything remains the same. Everything looks just like it has from the very beginning. And you say that God's going to destroy all this. And Peter says, don't be fooled. Don't be lulled into thinking that what the scoffers are telling you is what's going to happen. In other words, God's going to do what he says. God is going to come back matter of fact, in that same context, he said, he's going to prepare new heavens and the new earth. He's going to destroy what exists, and he's going to prepare a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. That's an interesting idea. I don't know everything about that. But I do know that there is going to be new heavens and a new earth, which I think is him saying there's going to be a new realm. There's going to be a new realm in which only righteousness dwells. And that's where faith will no longer be faith, it will be sight, as Paul would say in Second Corinthians. God has done some great things in history. But he has not put an end to history. We need to think about that. He's done some great things in history. But he's not put an end to history. There are things that happen in this life, there are sufferings, and there's difficulties in their broken relationships. And there's the day-to-day activities that are hard and their issues and physical and emotional issues. And all of those create, I'll call it, faith wavering. It's not always this stable line that goes straight across, it's there. But sometimes it's wavering, because it's who we are. We pray about it. And yet, we still hurt. And we ask sometimes Where is God when I hurt? That is a question we all ask. And I'm not suggesting that there isn't an answer to it. But I am suggesting this: it's a hard answer. It's a hard answer. Because the explanation is never, never clear. Because God doesn't speak to us that way. He never speaks to us and says, Kenny, here's the situation, here's what you're praying about. Here's what makes that difficult, and I'm expressing that to you. That's not what he does - not now. He's done that in the past. But that's not how he does that now. We don't see him involved. We don't see him involved in our lives. But we know he is involved. But because we don't see him many times, our faith can begin to waver. And that's when we say, "Lord I believe and help my unbelief." A challenge for most of us is not having faith. I've said this a lot. The challenge for people in this audience is not to have faith. Now, if you're just honest, and you don't have faith, that presents a different challenge for you. That's a different objective. There's a way to accomplish that in your life. But that's not what we're talking about this morning. We're talking about this morning, having it and not letting it waver and not losing it.

Hebrews 10 is a great faith chapter before you get to the greatest faith chapter. Hebrews 10 talks about those who were involved in less-than-ideal circumstances in verse 36. A Hebrew writer says "for you have native endurance so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise for yet a little while and he who is coming will come and will not tarry now. The just shall live by faith." That's a statement from the book of Habakkuk. "But if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul." Hebrews 10 and 11. The break and the chapters are unfortunate because the idea really starts in Hebrews 10, where I'm reading from verse 36. You have need of endurance. And when it gets to chapter 11, we're going to look at two examples in just a moment.

Let me tell you about what it means to endure. But faith is persistent endurance, and we need endurance. I want you to think about that word. You ever have to endure anything in your life? The very word endure is not pleasant. We think of enduring things. We think when we endure things, we're doing this here so we can get there. Isn't that what endurance is? We're enduring something at this point, so I can get to this point, and then the endurance is over. When I was in high school, I hated track and field. H-A-T-E-D. Because you had to run. This body is not made for running. It still isn't. But part of what the football coach told all of us is everybody's going to do something and track and field. I thought you got to kidding. So, I thought, well, what's the shortest event? Well, at the time it was called 100-yard dash. That was before this metric garbage started. 100-yard dash. Well, I couldn't do that because I was slow as Christmas. And everybody, including my buddies, knew I was slow as Christmas. So, I wasn't about to do that. But I did decide I'm going to run the 120-yard high hurdles. I was pretty tall as I still am. And it wasn't as much about speed as it was method, technique. So that's what I did. And I wasn't too bad at it. I wasn't a state champion or anything, but I don't think I ever finished last in a race. But the reason that I did that is because I didn't want to endure anything longer than 120 yards. After a few weeks doing the 120-yard highs when my coach came to me and said, Hey, we want you to, do you remember this, the 180 low hurdles. There was a 120 highs and the 180 lows. And I thought that's 60 more yards. I'm not about to do that. I did it a couple of times and was so bad at it, he finally said now we're going to get somebody else to do that. But I endured what I could, but it was because I had to do something. Endurance is a hard thing. I can't quickly, this morning, identify something in my life right now that I'm having to endure. But give it a day or two and I'll think of something.

There are two people in Hebrews 11 that I want to share their faith with you this morning. I just want to mention one verse about each of them and we're not going to mention every verse that's included in Hebrews 11. But I just want you to think about these two people. The first one is Noah. First one is Noah. Verse seven, "By faith Noah being divinely warned of things, not yet seen, moved with godly fear prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." We're don't have a lot of time this morning, I'm not going to take the time to talk about Noah's story, but we're all familiar with it. I just want you to think about what it took for Noah to do what God said when nobody else listened. Nobody else. I don't know if his sons and their wives and his wife, I don't know, I'm not convinced that they believed like Noah, and they may have. I know they were saved. And it may be that they were saved because of their own faith, but I'll tell you who had faith. Noah had faith. He was warned of things that he had never seen, and nobody had seen. And yet he was moved with a fear of God that said, I'm going to do that. So he did prepare the ark for the saving of his household. He did that so that his whole house would be

saved. And he made a statement to the world as a result of what he did. Noah is a wonderful example of having a fight that endures. Or what's found in the next verse, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance and he went out," this is this is great, "not knowing where he was going." Now, I've done some traveling in my life. But I don't think I've ever started out going somewhere and I didn't know where I was going. And I sure haven't gone out and taken my family and taken whatever it is that I own, even great positions. I've not gone out and taken all that somewhere, not knowing where I'm going. And yet, this great chapter on faith says that's exactly what Abraham did. He obeyed. He obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. He was told by God, this is what this is what's going to happen, this is what's going to happen to you. And so, he went out, not knowing where it was going, and others went with him. Those are just two of the examples that we find in Hebrews 11 Chapter. I know why those are in there. Because when you get to chapter 12, he talks about this great cloud of witnesses that surround us that we look to and we do this morning. As Brett lead "Faith of our Fathers" that I alluded to at the beginning of the lesson this morning, I think about lots of people that have gone on before that I owe a great debt to because they have shown me. They have shown me what it means to last. They've shown me what it means to endure.

So, before I read one final passage this morning, I want to just say a word or two about some folks here. We've got some folks among us that have great enduring faith. We have folks who've lost spouses. Some fairly recently, but some long before, in the natural process, a spouse should die. And for those it's been life changing. I've talked to some of you. For years having to live as you're living or as you were living because of a what appears to be a premature loss. And as I said, naturally it would be but because we don't know when death comes things happen. Others of you have dealt with broken relationships and you face difficulty, and it wears on your heart still. But you haven't lost faith. And from my vantage point, you're not going to lose faith. Because you have the kind of faith that we're talking about this morning. And still others of you endure the day-to-day grind of life. For various reasons, it may be that you have difficulty. For some reason there's difficulty in you maintaining employment and that might be for a myriad of reasons. Or you have difficulty supporting your family as you would like, as you would prefer. You have to make adjustments in your day-to-day routines because of maybe what you don't have. But you don't lose faith. You don't quit. You don't throw your hands in the air. You don't shake your fist at God. But there are circumstances that many of you face in your home environments that are hard. Some I know about, some I don't. But I want to tell you something. When I look at you, it is a strength to me. You are a strength to me because I see what you go through from a distance. I don't know everything about that. And in most cases, it's not my business to know everything about that unless that's something that you at some point would want to share with me or whomever. But there are a lot of people in this audience this morning that are my spiritual heroes. And at this point in time in my life, I don't have the circumstances you have. Now I may. Right now, today, as I am standing before you, I don't feel some health issue that appears to take me down. Now, it may be before I get out of this pulpit, this morning. But as I speak to you right now, I'm not dealing with that, not as far as I know. You are. But you're here. And you've not quit. And from all indication you're not going to quit. And that is a strong influence on me. That's part of why I want to be with you. As far as why I need to talk to you. That's part of why the Lord, I think, wants us to be a community of believers. I think that's why he wants us here. Together. Every time we're together. Every time we're called to be together, I think he wants us here. Now, I'm not suggesting that there may not be circumstances and situations that would hinder

you, but I am saying he wants you here. He wants you here because he knows what I need. And hopefully he wants you here because he knows what I need, and what you need. But you are that kind of influence on me. And what you are, really, is you are "I can do it too" people. When I look at you, I say I can do it, too. There's a lot of people that have influenced me in my life, but my parents are that way to me. They're my "I can do it too" people. They're doing it. They're loving each other through the good times and the hard times and the difficult times. And they're both, dads already over 90, mom's pretty close. They can't do what they used to do. They know that. I talked to my mother yesterday and said Well, how's it going, we're doing the same thing we've been doing. That's good. They love each other. They do the same thing that they do. And they're waiting, I know what they're doing. They're waiting until this life is over. But they're living this life to the fullest, while they can, looking forward to the next life, or as the Hebrew writer says "These all died in faith not having received the promises. But having seen them afar off, we're assured of them, embrace them and confess that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly, if they had called a mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire better. That is a heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God for He has prepared a city for them." This is a great life, for the most part. But this is nothing. This is nothing compared to a better country, a heavenly homeland. And that's what all those folks in Hebrews 11 look to. So, what would I suggest we do today? I would suggest that we keep on keeping on. I would suggest that regardless of our circumstances, regardless of what we face on a daily basis, we keep on keeping on. We keep plugging. We keep living a life of faith. And we keep saying to God, I'm here. This is who I am. These are my circumstances. And I'm just going to keep going Lord, because eventually, when this life is over faith will be sight. And I will be with you. I think that's a good message. And I think I need to be reminded that periodically and that's why I wanted to share these thoughts with you this morning. May God help us to have faith that endures. Lord, I have faith just help my unbelief.