

September 29, 2019 AM
Pastor Ken Hepner

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS:
34. “Faith in the Good Times and the Bad Times”
Hebrews 11:32 – 40

Introduction:

This morning we are returning to our study of the letter to the Greek-speaking, ethnic Jewish people had come to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior when they heard the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They experienced being **Saved** by **Faith** in Jesus Christ and received His presence in their lives, His indwelling Holy Spirit.

But as our author writes, they are in grave danger of turning away from following Jesus and turning back to legalistic righteousness! They are considering turning away from their faith in Jesus and reverting back to legalism: Keeping rules and laws that had no power to save anyone from anything!

So, he writes to refocus his readers attention on Jesus: His atoning sacrifice for our sins, His precious blood shed to cleanse us of sin, His resurrection life and victory over sin, death, and all the powers of Hell! He appeals to them to **Follow** the **Lead** of the Holy Spirit who was dwelling in their **Hearts**. His role in our lives is to bring us to Jesus, who He is, what He has done for us in His sacrifice on the Cross, and what He has taught.

The distinguishing characteristic of the Spirit’s presence in our lives is the agape love of God burning in our hearts and lives. Romans 5:5 “*And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.*” So, the author writes about the primary truth: What we do for God in works and deeds is always a result of having opened our hearts to receive the ministry of the Holy Spirit within us, motivating us to **Loving Obedience!**

The text in this letter that addresses the need to live a life of loving obedience is Hebrews 6:10 – 12 NLT; “*For God is not unfair. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him by caring for other Christians, as you still do. **Our great desire is that you will keep on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true.** Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God’s promises because of their faith and endurance.*”

Listen to his powerful words of counsel and admonition in the text. **Keep on Loving Others**, for in so doing you make certain what you are hoping for, the salvation of your souls. **Remain Faithful and endure to the very end of your lives on earth**, so that you do not permit the enemy of your souls to make you spiritually dull or indifferent to the things of God. We choose how we will live our lives and what or whom we will choose to love in life!

And please notice the author says, **God is not unfair: He won't forget how they glorify God and honor His name among them by Loving Others deeply!** We glorify God by loving others deeply with His love! We simply can't overstate the importance of living a life motivated by the Holy Spirit's presence in us motivating us to think and act in holy self-emptying, other-oriented love for people in our spheres of influence.

There is a reason why we must know and understand the truth about being motivated by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts as we respond to what Jesus did for us on the Cross by faith. This entire letter is a call to **Perseverance** in the **Walk** of **Faith** in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. **If we are to remain steadfast in our walk of faith in Christ Jesus, we must have greater motivation than our human will and determination moving us to obey God's laws!**

The Hebrew author again and again makes the clear and vital point that Jesus is the only way for human beings to be brought into a right relationship with God Almighty. Jesus alone makes us to be sons and daughters of God, adopted into His family, cleansed and purified of sins and self-interest, and people who are inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Jesus alone can give us this kind of **Open Access** to God the Father by grace through faith in Christ's atoning work!

Our author is imploring his readers to believe and go on believing in what Jesus has done to set them free from sin and to bring them into a right relationship with the Father. The entire eleventh chapter is a roll call of Heroes of the Faith, people who believed God in the face of overwhelming obstacles, and won spiritual victories!

The key text from Hebrews 11, which we've looked at for the past few weeks, telling us what faith is and does is Hebrews 11:1, 2 NLT: *"What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see. God gave his approval to people in days of old because of their faith."*

We are told in Scripture, the power of God to act on the earth in the lives of those who love Him and earnestly seek Him in praise, worship, and steadfast prayer, is absolute and beyond dispute. The power of God to act on earth is never the issue. He tells his readers what God looks for and longs for us to have His people **Believe** Him so **Strongly**, that is, with confident assurance, that what we **Hope** for becomes **Reality** in our lives!

True faith enables us to see beyond the physical and the human to the God of wonders who loves us with an everlasting love and who draws us to Himself with chords of lovingkindness! The author agrees with the Apostle Paul who wrote to the Corinthian believers about trusting the Lord God so deeply that we are able to see what has not yet happened!

II Corinthians 4:18 *"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal."* This morning we will look at people who did just that! They saw what did not yet exist yet. Some were victorious and some suffered greatly!

I. Victorious Heroes of the Faith:

1. **Gideon**, whose story we have in Judges 6:1 – 11. He was a timid man who became an instrument raised up of God to deliver his people from the oppression of the Midianites. Gideon

was a person from a humble, lowly tribe and family, called from a life of fear, and saluted by an angel of God in this surprising manner, *“The Lord is with you, mighty man of war.”* Gideon couldn’t at first receive the angel’s words. He rehearsed how humble and meager his family was.

The angel of the Lord delivers God’s call to him and assures him of success, confirming the assurance by fire out of the rock. Gideon is directed to offer sacrifice, and, instructed in his call Gideon believes God and goes out against the Midianites. God speaks to him again and reduced his army from thirty-two thousand to three hundred men.

They have only torches in pitchers and trumpets. Yet the Lord God put the whole army of the Midianites to confusion and destruction! The same faith that gave Gideon so much courage and honor enabled him to act with great humility when they wanted to crown him king. It is the grace of faith that, while it helps men to do great things, it keeps them from thinking too highly of themselves.

2. **Barak**, another instrument raised up to deliver Israel out of the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, Judges 4, where we read the following facts about Barak. Though he was a seasoned soldier and commander of the army, yet he received his commission and instructions from Deborah, who was a *“prophetess of the Lord;”* He insisted on having Deborah with him in his expedition. He obtained a great victory by his faith over all the vast army of Jabin’s commander Sisera. His faith taught him to return all the praise and glory to God. Faith turns to God in all dangers and difficulties, and then returns to God thank offerings for all His mercies and deliverances.

3. **Samson**, is another instrument that God raised up to deliver Israel from the Philistines: His story we have in Judges 13:1 through 16:31; and from it we learn that the grace of faith is the strength of the soul for great service. If Samson had not had a strong faith as well as a strong arm, he would have never performed such exploits. Often in his story we read *“He cried out to the Lord,”* and *“The Spirit of God came on him in power.”*

1.) By faith the servants of God may and sometimes do overcome even the roaring lion.

2.) In Samson’s life his faith is acknowledged and accepted, even when it is mixed with many failures.

3.) Samson’s faith is reignited in his heart at the end of his life and, in dying, his faith gives him victory over death and all his deadly enemies; his greatest exploits for God came as he was giving his life to destroy the temple of the Philistines.

4. **David**, the great man after God’s own heart. Few ever met with greater trials, and few ever discovered a more sincere walk of faith. His first appearance on the stage of the world was a great evidence of his faith. When as a young shepherd he killed the lion and the bear. His faith in God encouraged him to encounter the great Goliath, and it was by his faith in the Lord God Almighty that he was helped to triumph over him.

The same faith enabled him to bear patiently the hatred of King Saul and his army. David waited till God should put him into possession of the promised power and dignity. The same faith made him a very successful and victorious prince, and, after a long life of virtue and honor (though not without some stains of sin), he died in faith, relying on the everlasting covenant that God had made with him and his succeeding generations. The Covenant was as sure as the God who promised him! He has left behind him such excellent memoirs of the trials and acts of faith in the book of Psalms so that he will always be of great love and comfort, among the people of God.

5. **Samuel**, raised up to be a prophet of the Lord to Israel, a man who heard the voice of God early in his life as a small child. He was raised up as well as a ruler over God's people until the time came for them to have a king over them. God revealed himself to Samuel throughout his entire lifetime and continued to do so till his death. In his story there are some wonderful lessons for the people of God to learn.

Samuel's life represents one who heard the Word of the Lord first, then shared that word with others. He was sure to know what God was saying and to make it clear to those who heard him. Those of us who seek to know the Lord deeply and then to make His mind and will clear in the hearts and minds of others must be people who have deep faith in the Lord God who reveals Himself to them.

II. He Tells the Readers What They Accomplished By Faith.

He mentions some things that easily apply themselves to one or other of the persons named; but he mentions other things that are not so easy to be assigned to these people but must be left to general revelation in the Scriptures.

1. **By Faith They Subdued Kingdoms**, Hebrews 11:33. *"By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them."* Thus did David, Joshua, and many of the judges. Let's remember the fact that very often here on earth kingdoms of human beings are often set up in opposition to the will and the ways of God and his people. The power of God can easily subdue all those kings and kingdoms that set themselves to oppose him. **Faith is an excellent qualification of those who stand for the will and the ways of the Lord; faith in the Lord makes them Courageous, Righteous, and Wise.**

2. **By Faith They Worked Righteousness**, both in their public and personal capacities; they turned many from idolatry to the ways of righteousness; they believed God, and it was imputed to them for righteousness; they walked and acted righteously towards God and people. It is a greater honor and happiness to work righteousness than to work miracles; **faith is an active principle of the people of God Living In and being concerned with the Righteousness of God being manifest on earth.** Some people in our spheres of influence will never read, much less study God's Word. So you and I may be the only Bible some people will ever read!

3. **By Faith They Obtained Promises**, both general and specific promises to God's people and to them personally! It is faith that gives us an interest in the promises that God has made in the Scriptures; it is by faith that we have the comfort of the promises; and it is by faith that we are prepared to wait for the promises. The Lord God has gone on record in the Scriptures, through the pen of the Apostle Paul, that all of God's promises are yes and amen in Christ Jesus. It is by faith that we wait before the Lord and receive the promises God has made to us!

4. **By Faith They Shut the Mouths of Lions**; In the Scriptures we are given three human instances when men of God stopped the mouths of lions by the power of God flowing through them! Samson stopped the mouth of a lion by tearing it apart with his bare hands, Judges 14:5, 6. David grabbed a lion by its mane and clubbed it to death, I Samuel 17:34, 35, and Daniel was judged to be innocent and righteous by God so God sent his angel to shut the mouths of the lions, Daniel 6:22. There are lessons here for all of us to learn: The power of God is above whatever has greater power than we do, even over something as ferocious as a lion. Faith engages the power of God for his people, whenever it shall be for His glory on the earth whether it is an enemy, a vicious animal, or of violent people!

5. **By Faith They Quenched the Flames of the Fire**, Hebrews 11:34. So Moses, by the prayer of faith, quenched the fire of God's wrath that was kindled against the people of Israel, Numbers. 11:1, 2. So did the three children, or rather mighty champions, Daniel 3:17-27. Their faith in God, refusing to worship the golden image, exposed them to the fiery furnace which Nebuchadnezzar had prepared for them, and their faith engaged for them that power and presence of God in the furnace which quenched the violence of the fire, so that not so much as the smell thereof passed on them. Never was the grace of faith more severely tried, never more nobly exerted, nor ever more gloriously rewarded, than theirs was.

6. **By Faith They Escaped the Edge of the Sword**. David escaped the sword of Goliath and of Saul; and Mordecai and the Jews escaped the sword of Haman. Human swords are held in the hand of God, and he can blunt the edge of the sword, and turn it away from his people against their enemies when he pleases. Faith takes hold of that hand of God which has hold of the human swords; and God has often been moved by His love to act on earth by the faith of his people.

7. **By Faith Their Weakness Was Turned Into Strength**. From national weakness, into which the Jews often fell by their unbelief; upon the revival of their faith, all their interest and affairs revived and flourished. The Apostle Paul is such an outstanding illustration of this truth the Hebrew author wants his readers to see. Paul actually wrote about boasting in his weaknesses, because in his weaknesses the Lord Jesus showed Himself to be strong. "*For when I am weak, then I am strong.*" And it is the same grace of faith that from spiritual weakness helps people to recover and renew their strength.

8. **By Faith They Became Strong and Courageous in Battle**: Joshua, the judges, and David. True faith gives truest courage and patience, as it discerns the strength of God, and thereby the weakness of all his enemies. And they were not only courageous but successful. God, as a reward and encouragement of their faith, *put to flight the armies of those who opposed them and the purposes of God*" enemies to their religion; God made them flee and fall before his faithful servants. Believing and praying commanders, at the head of believing and praying armies, have been so motivated and honored by God that nothing could stand before them.

9. **By Faith Women Received their Dead Raised to Life Again**, There are four instances in the Scriptures of women receiving back their dead raised to life. The widow of Zarephath in the time of Elijah I Kings 17:23; The Shunamite woman in the days of Elisha, II Kings 4:36. Christ had compassion on the widow of Nain, in Luke 7:12 as her only son was being borne on a funeral bier out of the town And Mary and Martha received their brother Lazarus back from the dead recorded in John 11.

III. He Tells Us What Some Believers Endured by Faith.

In the Holy Scriptures not everyone was given an easy road to righteousness. Some of God's most wonderful instruments of His Word, teachers, prophets, and godly men and women, endured incredible suffering for the sake of the Gospel message.

Some people in the Word of God endured absolutely horrible things by faith, and in those actions of their enduring suffering the Lord God Almighty received great glory on earth! The truth that Church historians tell us is that the only Apostle to die of the complications of old age was the Apostle John. All of the others died for the sake of the Gospel of Christ Jesus! And some of them died in the most awful ways imaginable!

Peter is the one author in the Scriptures who attacks suffering head on. His first letter has 19 references to suffering in five chapters. In I Peter 4:19 he writes: “*So then those who suffer according to the will of God should commit themselves to their faithful creator and continue to do good.*”

1. **By Faith They Were Tortured, not Accepting Deliverance**, Hebrews 11:35. They were put on the rack, to make them renounce their God, their Savior, and their religion. They bore the torture, and would not accept of deliverance on such vile terms; and that which kept them going and to suffer was the hope they had of *obtaining a better resurrection*, and deliverance into the very presence of God because they had stood firm and believed in the face of incredible suffering here on earth!

2. **By Faith They Endured Trials** “*of cruel mocking and their backs were cut open with whips.*” Hebrews 11:36. They were persecuted in their reputation by *mocking*, which are cruel to a mind and heart that seeks to live in honor to Jesus; in their persons by *scourging*, the punishment of slaves; in their liberty by *bonds and imprisonment*. How utterly evil is the malice that wicked men have towards the righteous, how far it will go, and what a variety of cruelties it will invent and exercise on those against whom they have no cause to inflict pain and suffering on them except in the matters of their God.

3. **By Faith They were Put to Death in Awful Ways**; some “*were stoned,*” as was Zechariah the godly priest who called out the sin of the wicked king, (2 Chronicles. 24:21), “*sawn asunder,*” as history records the prophet Isaiah was sawed in two by Manasseh. “*They were slain with the sword.*” All sorts of deaths were prepared for them; their enemies brought on God’s people death in many acts of cruelty and terror, and yet they boldly met it and endured it.

4. **By Faith Those Who Escaped Death Were Badly Tortured** that death might have seemed a better thing than to go on living in such agony and suffering. Their enemies spared them, only to prolong their misery, and wear out all their patience; for they were forced to *some went about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented; they wandered about in deserts, and on mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth,*” Hebrews 11:37b, 38.

They were stripped of the conveniences of life, and turned out of house and home. They had no clothing to put on, but were forced to cover themselves with the skins of animals. They were driven out of all human society, and forced to hide themselves in dens and caves, and make their complaint to rocks and rivers, not more obdurate than their enemies.

Such sufferings as these they endured then for their faith; and such they endured through the Power of the Grace of Faith: and which shall we most admire, the wickedness of human nature, that is capable of perpetrating such cruelties on fellow creatures, or the excellence of divine grace, that is able to bear up the faithful under such cruelties, and to carry them safely through all?

IV. What They Obtained By Their Faith.

1. A most honorable character and commendation from God, the true Judge and fountain of honor—that *the world was not worthy* of such men; the world did not deserve such blessings; they did not know how to value them, nor how to use them. Wicked people thought and acted as though the righteous are not worthy to live in the world, and God declares the world is not worthy of them; and, though they widely differ in their judgment, they agree in this, that it is not

fit that good men should have their rest in this world; and therefore God receives them out of it, to that world that is suitable to them, and yet far beyond the merit of all their services and sufferings.

2. They “*obtained a good report,*” Hebrews 11:39 of all good men, and of the truth itself, and have the honor to be enrolled in this sacred roll call of the Old-Testament people who believed God to the very end, God’s witnesses! They had a witness for them in the consciences of their enemies, who, while they thus abused them, were condemned by their own consciences, as persecuting those who were more righteous than themselves.

3. They obtained an interest in the promises though not the full possession of them. They believed the promises, though they had not received the things promised. This does not mean the possession of heaven as their final home. That they did receive when they died. But on earth they believed God’s promises were true often in the face of evidence to the contrary! In this world order of things they discovered this precious faith.

This, the author writes to provoke Christians to a holy jealousy and to follow these people’s living and dying example; that they should not allow themselves to be outdone in the exercise of faith by those who came home to the arms of Jesus believing what He had done for them in His suffering, death, shedding His precious blood, and in His resurrection life and victory! Hit the finish line running hard, into the arms of Jesus!

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS:
34. "Faith in the Good Times and the Bad Times"
Hebrews 11:32 – 40

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Introduction:

We are in a study of the Book of Hebrews, which was written to refocus them on Jesus. The readers heard the Gospel and were **S**_____ by **F**_____ in Jesus and they received His presence in their lives!

When they believed in Jesus, the Holy Spirit came to live in their hearts. He makes Himself known. He appeals to them to **F**_____ the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in their **H**_____.

The distinguishing characteristic of the Holy Spirit's presence is agape/love, Romans 5:5. What we do for God must always be motivated by the Holy Spirit inspiring us to **L**_____ **O**_____!

The constraint of love is addressed in Hebrews 6:10 – 12 NLT. Keep on **L**_____ **O**_____. Remain faithful for your lifetime! God is not unfair! He won't forget how they **G**_____ **G**_____ by loving others!

This entire letter is a call to **P**_____ in our **W**_____ of **F**_____ in our Lord Jesus Christ.

He appeals to his readers to stay focused on Jesus because what Jesus has done for our redemption is the only way to **O**_____ **A**_____ to God.

The author encourages the readers to believe and go on believing in Jesus for a lifetime. For the past few weeks we have been in the roll call of heroes of the faith, the text Hebrews 11:1, 2 NLT.

This morning we will focus on many people listed in Hebrews 11 who believed God in the face of incredible obstacles and won victories while others believed God and suffered greatly.

I. Victorious Heroes of the Faith:

G_____

-
B_____

-
S_____

-
D_____

-
S_____

II. What These Heroes Accomplished by Faith: Hebrews 11:33 – 35

1. By faith they **S**_____ **K**_____
2. By faith they **W**_____ **R**_____
3. By faith they **O**_____ **P**_____
4. By faith they **S**_____ the mouths of **L**_____
-
5. By faith they **O**_____ the **F**_____ of the **F**_____
-
6. By faith they escaped from the **E**_____ of the **S**_____
-
7. By faith their **W**_____ was turned to **S**_____
-
8. By faith they became **S**_____ and **C**_____ in battle
-
9. By faith women received back their **D**_____ **R**_____ to **L**_____

III. What a Way to Fight a Battle: Hebrews 11:35b – 37

Not all of the people in the Scriptures had a time of incredible victory in their lives, a time when their faith triumphed over evil in the world! Some of God's people endured horrific circumstances by faith! I Peter 4:19

Because of their faith some people were **T**_____, not accepting **D**_____

-
Because of their faith some people **E**_____ great **T**_____

-
Because of their faith some people were **P**_____ to **D**_____ in **A**_____ ways

Because of their faith some people who escaped **D**_____ were **T**_____ and yet refused to renounce their faith

Such suffering these people endured was accomplished by the **G**_____ of God they obtained by **F**_____!

What They ALL Obtained by Faith: Hebrews 11:39, 40

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. What is the danger in people turning away from their personal walk with the Lord Jesus by faith in and through what He has done to redeem us all?
2. Why is it so important for us to weigh our acts of obedience, insuring we are being constrained by the holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love of Jesus?
3. What is your experience of believing God: Is your faith a constant and strong thing in your life or does it seem weak at times in your heart?
4. Do you think most Christians understand that it is by faith that we are enabled to see past the human and the physical, to see eternal things? Why or why not?
5. Which one or ones of the victorious heroes of the faith do you most identify with in your walk with God by faith? Why do you identify with them?
6. What are some things in the lives of those victorious people that you want to emulate, using their faith as a model for your faith in the Lord God?
7. What do we learn from the lives of the people in the text who endured such horrific suffering because of their steadfast faith to the end? Why do you think the author includes these people in his roll call of heroes of the faith?
8. Read together aloud the story of the fourth chapter of I Peter and discuss insights you have regarding how our faith should determine our actions when we walk in suffering.
9. Read together aloud the story of the apostles being beaten for their faith in Jesus in Acts 4. What do we learn from them about suffering hardships?

10. How did the Holy Spirit speak to you about the importance of living your faith as you seek to honor and glorify the Lord Jesus in your decisions and behaviors? How does your knowledge of God's Word in Scripture impact your decision-making?