

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Hebrews 11

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through the book of Hebrews –

And since the beginning of 2023 – we have been in Hebrews 11

I think this is our 10th or 11th study through this amazing chapter – where the writer of Hebrews gives us examples of men and women that were able to endure / they were able persevere because of their faith in who God is and in God's promises.

By faith – they endured

By faith, they overcame

By faith, they were victorious – we saw that last week with the Children of Israel and the walls of Jericho

By faith, they were saved – Rahab and her family.

Over the last few weeks – I have mentioned that our Christian walk is a collection of episodes of faith – one after the other.

And one of the things that the writer of Hebrews is going to stress in our text this evening is that faith can be from time to time –very difficult.

That from time to time, it is God's will to lead His children through seasons of difficulty.

Think about some of the false teachings that are in the church today – if you are going through difficulty – it's because you don't have enough faith.

The same false teaching was going around back then –

There is nothing new under the sun – (Ecc 1:9)

This group of Jewish believers were being told – the reason that you are struggling, the reason that you are being persecuted and all these bad things are happening to you is because you have left the faith.

The writer of Hebrews is going to set the record straight – and say “Jesus is enough”

Let's pray...

[Heb 11:32-40 NKJV] 32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also [of] David and Samuel and the prophets:

As the writer of Hebrews is writing his letter –

He has already given example after example of men and women and groups of people that demonstrated faith –

That were able to endure –

And so as he continues to write – he says, “Listen, I am not running out of examples of individuals or people to give to you – to convince you – I am running out of time”

Here are six very defective men you know all too well – and if they don't bring it home for you – what more can I say.

So the first example he provides in this verse is Gideon.

And when we meet Gideon in Judges 6 and 7

We know that Gideon was man that was full of fear.

And God chooses Gideon to deliver His people from the oppression of the Mediants.

Gideon felt that he was unqualified to do the job

But the Lord offered Gideon assurance time after time after time

And even after God commissioned Gideon to lead the Israelites in battle – we find no less that five times that Gideon was afraid.

So Gideon leads an army of 32,000 against 135,000 ites – and God says, this is not fair –

And God reduces Gideons army to 300 and say – “Now it's fair”

Why?

Because God wanted to show Gideon that victory was not going to come by Gideon's battle plans or resources – it was going to be God that would give them victory.

And God gave them victory – the Midianites pretty much killed themselves.

Promise made – promise kept.

By faith, Gideon confronted the enemy.

What made Gideon an outstanding leader?

It was faith in an outstanding Lord.

Next individual mentioned in this verse – Barak.

Barak was another fearful man. (Judges 4)

He was serving Deborah.

Deborah was given a word from the Lord for Barak to lead the army against the Canaanite.

And because of his fear – Barak said he wasn't going unless Deborah went with him.

And it was after this that Barak surrendered to the call of God upon his life – and like Gideon – he faced unbelievable odds and won an incredible victory.

Now some people say – the fact that he required Deborah to go with him shows that he lacked faith.

But at the critical moment he acted in faith when told to advance against a superior army – and God used him to deliver the Israelites.

The next one – Samson.

Samson had such an up and down life.

In the course of his life – he broke every single Nazarite vow.

He was a compromiser.

He had serious weaknesses.

He offers up two prayers – and they are both self serving – all about him.

And even with all the bad decisions that he made – he is remembered for his faith.

That is how gracious God is with us.

This should bring us hope – because none of us have lived a life of perfection.

I can speak for myself – in saying - I haven't lived a life of complete submission and obedience to God.

So when we look at the life of Samson and say – how could God use someone like Samson? The same way He still uses you and me.

Flawed

Failed

Weak

Broken

Imperfect

The next person – Jephthah.

In Judges 11 – Jephthah is the judge who had a very unfortunate upbringing –

He was the son of a harlot

his brothers kick him out of the family

Yet God still used Jephthah to deliver the people of Israel.

And I think why he is included here is to show us that faith can rise higher than our circumstances and the environment we grew up in.

Can God use someone who was brought up in a broken family? Of course

Someone abandoned? Of course

Then we get to David –

David was a man that filled with flaws –

But he is recognized as a man of faith

His trust began when he was just a kid.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon him at a young age –

He was anointed king over Israel

He is a man after God's own heart

And yet, he is guilty of the most vile sin

He commits adultery with Bathsheba and then arranges to have Uriah, her husband killed in battle.

Were there consequences to what he did – yes.

But David is remembered for his faith he showed throughout his life –

King Saul went after him – he hunted him down and yet David had multiple opportunities to take down Saul – but he didn't. Because he trusted the Lord.

When David flees Jerusalem when his son Absalom attempts to take over the throne – did he fight back against Absalom?

He left it in the hands of the Lord – by faith.

The next example – Samuel

Turn to 1 Sam 3

[1Sa 3:19-21 NKJV] 19 So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. 20 And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew

that Samuel [had been] established as a prophet of the LORD. 21 Then the LORD appeared again in Shiloh. For the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

From a very young age – Samuel was a person that was anointed and appointed by God to speak the word of God to the people of God.

If someone wanted to summarize Samuel life using one word – it would be “faithful”

Samuel was God’s man at God’s moment in God’s time.

When the priesthood was corrupt

When the country had drifted into apostasy – Samuel continued to be used by God.

And by faith – he made it.

Was he perfect – nope

Because he too made some poor decisions as a parent

So in these examples alone – we have men with some serious sin issues, we have men that had family issues, men that were afraid, men that were hesitant, men that did some really bad things and men that were not the greatest dad.

But I want you to notice what they were capable of – by faith.

As we go through the next two verses – underline the action words.

33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Do you see the power that comes to us through faith????

[Zec 4:6b NKJV] 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts.

Question –

Did Moses deliver the Children of Israel through brute strength?

Nope

Did God deliver them by supernatural means / through miracles? Yes

Did He do it through a sacrifice? He does

Moses subdued Egypt – by the power of God.

Joshua subdued the Promised Land – by the power of God.

When you study the life of Daniel, he subdued Babylon and Persia – by the power of God.

When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon –

Judges 6:14

[Jdg 6:14 NKJV] 14 Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. **Have I not sent you?"**

God has called you and I – therefore God is going to be with us.

And we are going to experience victory – when we make the decision to relate to God – not on the basis of what we can do – but on what He has done.

This doesn't mean that we are insulated from suffering.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again. **Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.**

In 1 Kings 17 – we have the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath –

And God uses Elijah to restore the life of her son.

We find the same thing in 2 Kings 4 – with Elisha and the Shunammite woman and her son.

Elisha did the same.

They suffered for a while with great grief and pain – but God was gracious in removing their pain.

And He is gracious in removing our own pain by faith.

I had you make a note of – others were tortured, not accepting deliverance –

Someone might ask –

Why are some delivered – like the sons of the Shunamite woman and the widow of Zarephath and others remain to suffer???

Stephen is stoned to death in the book of Acts –

James is beheaded in the book of Acts

Paul and most of the apostles – martyrs

Why does God permit it???

Surely, He can prevent it?

[Col 1:24 NKJV] 24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

What Paul is saying here in Colossians 1 – is that he is willing to suffer so that the gospel can continue to be preached – so that the story of hope continues to be given and the love of God continues to be made known so that people will have a right relationship with God.

And the same thing can be said of the believer who suffers for their spouse who is not saved – their brother or sister who is not saved.

Because they know they do it for the greater good – they know that the suffering is but for a moment -

[Mat 16:25-26 NKJV] 25 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Our suffering doesn't mean God isn't winning.

And it doesn't mean God isn't faithful.

And it doesn't mean God is unconcerned for us.

God cares deeply for us, and He is most certainly faithful, and His victory is ALREADY assured.

36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—

Jesus reminded the religious rulers that their ancestors did these very things.

[Mat 23:34-36 NKJV] 34 "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: [some] of them you will kill and crucify, and [some] of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

And then if you continue reading in Matthew's gospel it tells us that Jesus wept over the city.

And as He wept over the city, He said

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under [her] wings, but you were not willing! 38 "See! Your house is left to you desolate; 39 "for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed [is] He who comes in the name of the LORD!' "

Oral Jewish traditions make the claim that it was the prophet Isaiah who was sawn in two under the leadership of the wicked King Manasseh.

Others were deprived of any food and other resources.

Again, this would be a reminder to the Jewish believers who couldn't make a living because they were believers.

The temptation was there for all of them.

You get food, shelter, family if you stop this nonsense about Jesus.

If you will just stop all this nonsense about the bible being true

If you stop all this nonsense about sinners needing a Savior

If you stop all the nonsense about God's promises

Stop all that and we will give you everything that you need – everything that you want.

That's what the world says –

The world can take away our ability to make a living

The world can take away our home

There might come a day when they say we can no longer meet openly

But they cannot take away from us what they never gave us –

They can't take Jesus away from us.

They cannot take His love away from us

They can't take His grace from us

They can't take His forgiveness that He has given us from us

They can't take the promise of Heaven from us

Because they never gave it to you and to me.

And Jesus said – I will never leave you or forsake you

He also said -

[Mat 5:11 NKJV] 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

[Mat 10:22 NKJV] 22 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

[Mat 19:29 NKJV] 29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

The writer of Hebrews is asking the reader to do something that world will not ask them to do.

He is asking the reader to stand up for Jesus

He is saying – expect ridicule,

Pain

Persecution

Problems

[Phi 1:29 NKJV] 29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, [in] dens and caves of the earth.

I love this phrase!

The world is not worthy of people who have a commitment of this degree to the Lord.

And the world is not going to be the reward of those with this kind of faith.

Heaven is their reward!

Why did they wander in deserts and mountains?

These saints were expelled from society.

That is why they were deprived of their home, their property and all their possessions.

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something **better** for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

The word testimony means – a statement concerning the truth.

And what these people have been called on to do – these Jewish believers

Is to give testimony about the faithfulness of God.

The promises of God

God's ability to keep His promises

But here in verse 39 – the writer of Hebrews is talking about a singular promise.

He is talking about those that had about God's promise concerning the land and concerning Jesus and they didn't live to see it.

But they lived their lives as if the promise was going to come true.

When people ask – “How were the Old Testament saints saved?”

The answer –

They believed by faith that God would keep His promise concerning the Messiah.

How are we saved?

We believe by faith, that God has kept His promise concerning the Messiah.

I had you make a note of the word better –

Long ago God had seen something better for us.

The word is used 16x in the NT, 12 of them in Hebrews.

This has been one of the major theme words of the book of Hebrews.

Remember the point that Jesus is “superior”?

He’s “better”.

He’s better than the angels (1:4)

He’s a better Savior (3:1)

He has a better hope (7:19)

He has a better covenant (7:22; 8:6)

He has better promises (8:6)

He has a better sacrifice (9:23)

What’s that better thing God has provided for us?

It’s Jesus.

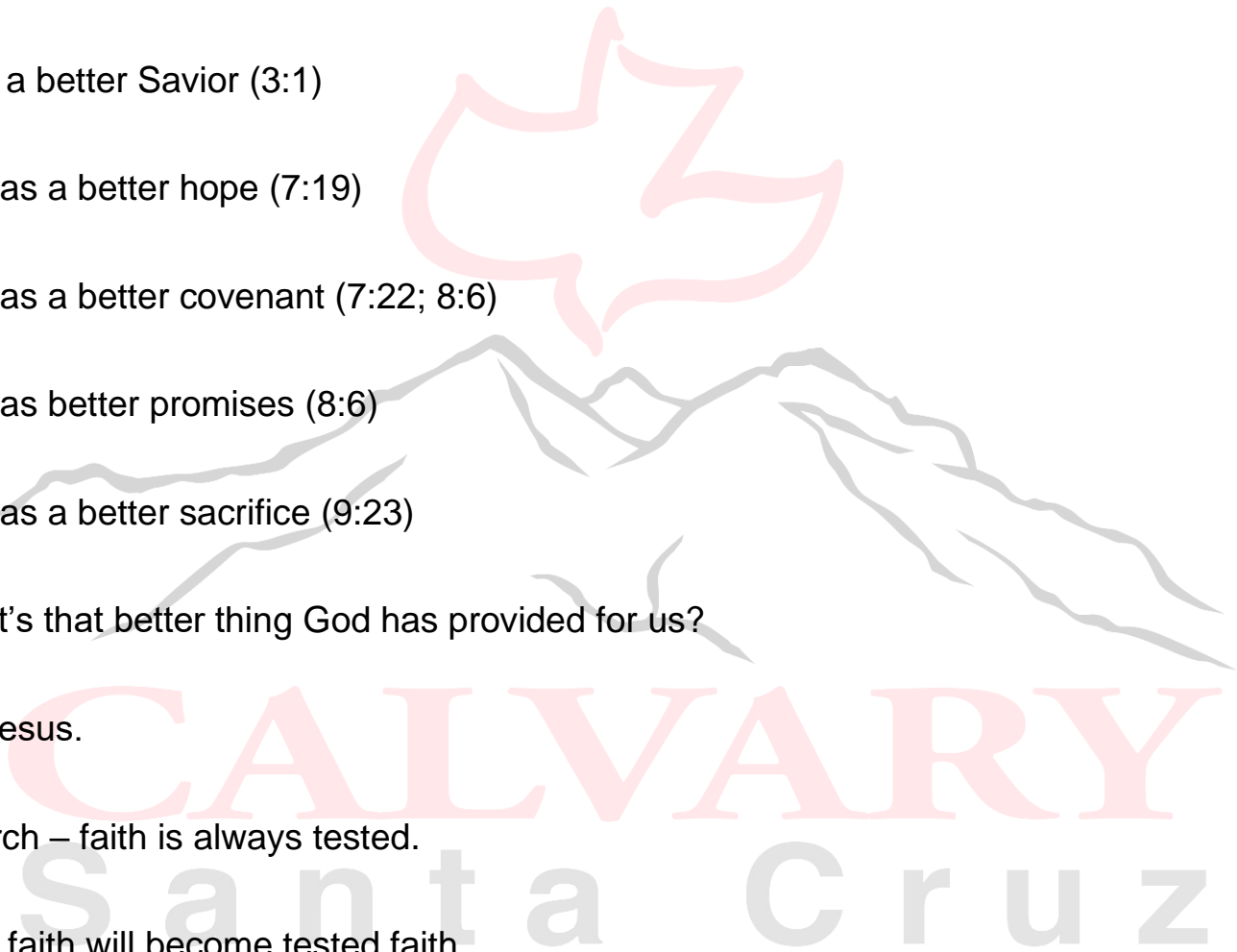
Church – faith is always tested.

Real faith will become tested faith

By faith, we believe in Jesus

By faith, we trust in Jesus

By faith, we follow Jesus



By faith, we walk into a future secure knowing that Jesus is already there.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

