

By Faith – The Others and Us

Hebrews 11

Introduction

1. Having given attention to some prominent characters of faith in the Old Testament, the Hebrew writer concludes with the implication that there are so many more beyond mentioning that possessed such faith – **“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me...” (v. 32).**
 2. The people of God have always lived by faith and been animated to the service of God by faith in any situation, no matter how difficult.
 3. The Hebrew audience needed to understand what they had been called to in Christ Jesus – not a life of ease, but one of devotion to God regardless of the consequences. A life of trust in God who rewards diligent seekers.
 4. This chapter must be looked at as a standard God calls us to. The writer applies this kind of faith to his audience – we are to follow the examples he set forth.
- I. By Faith the Others
- A. Faith Can Accomplish Anything God Requires **(vv. 32-35a)**
 - a. The writer mentions some specific men who accomplished great feats by faith in God, but does not go into detail as before in the chapter:
 - i. Gideon (Judges 6-7) – Overthrew Midianites with just 300 men.
 - ii. Barak (Judges 4-5) – Sent by Deborah the prophetess to defeat Sisera and the army of Jabin king of Canaan.
 - iii. Samson (Judges 15-16) – The strong warrior who had many impressive victories over the Philistines who eventually killed 3,000 at his own death by pulling down the pillars of the house they were in.
 - iv. Jephthah (Judges 11-12) – Overpowered the Ammonites and subdued the Ephraimites.
 - v. David – The man after God’s own heart. Second king in Israel. Defeated the Philistine champion, Goliath, and had many other military victories.
 - vi. Samuel – The last of the judges and the first of the prophets of Israel. Anointed both Saul and David as king.
 - vii. And the prophets – all those men who prophesied for God, and stood for truth against idolaters, and rebellious Israel – Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, Isaiah, etc.
 - b. These men accomplished many things for God by faith in Him – **(vv. 33-35a)**
 - i. Subdued kingdoms – trusted in God’s power to defeat enemies, many times much larger than they (Gideon).
 - ii. Worked righteousness – as judges and kings they upheld justice, and God’s word.
 - iii. Obtained promises – received and came to the realization of promises from God.

- iv. Stopped the mouths of lions (Daniel?); quenched the violence of fire (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego?); escaped the edge of the sword (like David, and many others); out of weakness were made strong (Samson after losing his strength with cut hair, David against Goliath); Became valiant in battle/turned to flight armies of aliens (By faith, God took feeble men as leaders of Israel and made them such great warriors that enemies fled their presence); raised dead children (Elijah).
 - c. No matter who we are, or what it is that God requires, we can do it if we have faith – **Luke 17:1-6**
 - i. **(vv. 1-4)** – Especially the Lord’s requirement of forgiveness would be a huge test of faith.
 - ii. **(v. 5)** – implication that they thought they didn’t have enough.
 - iii. **(v. 6)** – only need faith, even as small as a mustard seed, to obey God’s word.
 - 1. **Romans 10:17** – faith comes from God’s word.
 - 2. If God requires something, and we trust in Him, we can do what He requires – however big or small.
 - d. Forsake relationships (friends/family), quit a job, address another’s sin, stand for the truth, etc.
- B. Faith Can Endure Anything with God’s Help **(vv. 35b-38)**
- a. **(vv. 35b-38)** – lists matters which people of faith in general endured for the sake of God.
 - i. No doubt has specific people and instances in mind but forgoes with the specifics.
 - ii. Their faith led to immense pain, and even death – but they endured!
 - 1. Tortured not accepting deliverance – period of silence between testaments – Syrian ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, made mother watch her 7 sons being tortured, then she was put to death. (2 Maccabees 7)
 - 2. Sawn in two – tradition points to Isaiah during the reign of Manasseh.
 - b. Faith expects persecution – **2 Timothy 3:12**
 - i. And understands the blessing of such – **Matthew 5:10-12** – looking to the blessing given to endurance.
 - c. Faith does not seek deliverance by compromising truth – **Revelation 2:8-11** (church in Smyrna) – it is faithful to the point of death.
 - d. Faith ultimately endures temptation – **“were tempted”** – **1 Corinthians 10:13** – acknowledging there is nothing God allows us to go through that He can’t bring us through.
- C. Faith Knows Its Worth **(v. 38)**
- a. **(vv. 37-38)** – either from pilgrimage like Abraham **(v. 9)**, being ostracized from society, or made to flee for your life.

- i. **1 Kings 18:4** – during the reign of Ahab, Obadiah hid 100 prophets in caves.
 - b. The world thinks that people of faith are not worthy of living in the world:
 - i. The world is not accepting of people of faith, and drives them out – **John 15:18-19**
 - ii. Often societies implement laws contrary to people of faith in an effort to quiet them, or physically shut them away – **Acts 5:29** – but ought to obey God rather than men!
 - c. However, the reality is that the world is not worthy of people of faith – **(v. 38)**
 - i. **1 John 2:17** – the world is concerned with the ephemeral and unimportant, but the faithful are characterized by the eternal.
 - ii. **Matthew 5:13-16** – we are the salt and light that the world continually rejects. We are what makes the world palpable to God.
 - iii. **1 Peter 2:11-12; 4:4** – we are the people of God, and the world is not worthy of our devotion.
 - d. Ultimately, our worth is in the fact we are God’s royal priesthood on earth, and we belong to Him – **1 Peter 2:9-10**
 - D. Faith Understands God Never Overlooks or Forgets the Faithful **(v. 39)**
 - a. **(v. 35b)** – The writer mentions “others” – not all mentioned by name, but God knows who they are.
 - i. **Hebrews 6:10** – God is not unjust to forget the faithful deeds we have done.
 - ii. **Matthew 6:1-4** – Faith acts to be seen of God, not be noticed by men – AND GOD DOES SEE!
 - b. **(v. 39)** – anybody and everybody who lives by faith receives a good testimony before God – **(v. 2)**
 - i. **All these – NOT JUST THE ONES MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY, BUT EVEN THE “OTHERS” NOT MENTIONED BY NAME.**
 - c. **(vv. 39-40)** – People of faith may die before receiving the promises of God, but God never forgets them, and always follows through.
 - i. Promise – being made perfect (complete in justification – HAD TO HAPPEN THROUGH CHRIST, AND THEY DIDN’T SEE HIS DAY).
 - ii. **Hebrews 12:22-24** – spirits of just men made perfect by the blood of Jesus. (God did not forget to apply the blood of Jesus to those who lived before it – **Hebrews 9:15**)
- II. Therefore, Let Us
 - A. Take Encouragement from These Witnesses **(12:1a)**
 - a. Great cloud of witnesses – those people of faith enumerated in chapter 11.
 - i. It is as though they were cheering us on toward our own finish line.
 - ii. We are not alone!

- b. They cheer us on with their example, and their success.
- B. Make Every Effort Toward Endurance **(12:1b)**
 - a. Chapter 11 makes it abundantly clear that faith must undergo great tests, and it must endure to be pleasing to God.
 - b. Don't make it difficult with unnecessary encumbrances.
 - c. Weight – in distinction from sin – **1 Corinthians 6:12** – lawful but not helpful.
 - i. The people of faith in chapter 11 did not hold on to something of a temporal nature just because they were allowed to.
 - ii. They made sacrifices!
 - iii. Their main goal was the eternal city, and nothing would hinder them from making it there.
 - d. Sin – any sin must be laid aside to finish the race.
 - i. Cannot walk by faith in sin – **1 John 1:6**
 - ii. Sin of unbelief – wavering faith/trust in God and His promises – **Hebrews 10:35-39** – need confidence, and persisting faith.
- C. Fix Our Focus On Jesus **(12:2)**
 - a. Author – archēgos – archē (begin/origin) agō (to lead) – primarily signifies “one who takes a lead in, or provides the first occasion of, anything.” (VINE)
 - i. Jesus is the prime example.
 - ii. Jesus is the great leader.
 - iii. Jesus took up His cross first, and we follow – **Mark 8:34**
 - b. Finisher – in His death He completed what was necessary for our salvation and sees us through to the end by His example of finishing Himself, and His aid as High Priest.

Conclusion

1. We need to learn from these examples of faith in Hebrews 11, and gain encouragement by them as we seek to do the same.