

HEBREWS – LEVITICUS
“Hall of Faith – Part 6”
Hebrews 11:32-40
October 29, 2023

Hebrews 11:32-40

³² And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. ¹

“This is God’s Word.”

We turn the corner today and are headed down the final steps of the hall of faith. Here we have highlighted a number of interesting characters from our collective faith history. Old Testament heroes and some who may not have come to mind. Yet, in God’s providence, this listing was given by the Holy Spirit to the preacher as he wrote this letter. The recipients are Hebrew – raised in the synagogues and taught the law and the prophets from childhood. They have surrendered their lives to Jesus

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Heb 11:32–40). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Christ as Savior and yet, now with the growing threats of persecution that are bubbling over as the genocidal Nero leads Rome and will go down in history as a despot who seeks to eradicate Israel and Christianity, their fear of the future is spiking.

Thus, the letter. This is more than a list of encouraging stories. This is not a pep-rally inspirational talk intent on getting the team ready for the big game. This is not an exercise in entertainment, but a pointed, direct word from the Lord to his people who must have a deep faith now and, in the days to come. This is the reality of the house built upon the rock, for the sandy foundation will not survive that which is coming.

This is a life and death message.

But, then isn't every sermon?

The clarity is needed and the church must strip away the superficial to hear that which God is declaring.

History reminds us, as it did the first listeners to this letter, that no government entity is eternal. Rome did not always rule Israel. We know that the empire would not last.

There is no dictatorship that will last forever.

There is no democracy that will last forever.

The freedom that these in the first century were experiencing was temporal and fragile. A word to the wise here – freedom has always been fragile.

While earthly freedom based on temporal governmental structures are fragile, faith in the eternal God who was, who is, and always will be is foundational.

At times, we need a reminder.

If we refuse to listen, circumstances will awaken us to this reality one way or another.

So, we, like the Hebrew believers are encouraged, no commanded, to have faith. True faith.

- **Faith in a future**
- **Faith in spite of failures**
- **Faith in the foundation**

FAITH IN A FUTURE

Each of the Old Testament children of God listed here had a faith in something promised, but not yet seen. Thus, the definition of faith as given in the first verse of this chapter.

Whether Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Moses, or Rahab...each was living based on a promise they believed. A promise from God for a future and a hope. A promise that had been given to them, or to their ancestors, and one that even in the challenging times of life where doubt germinates like a seed in the soil, they continued to believe.

A deep faith can be a wavering faith at times, but the true one always pulls us back.

Thus, the writer says this...

Hebrews 11:32a

³² And what more shall I say?²

Like any preacher who says “what more shall I say” he says more. But, it’s clear as he is writing this letter that he does not desire to stay in the

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:32.

history of the faithful, but to prove the point. He could keep going, but has abbreviated what he could say.³ He is pointing backward so they may move forward.

This backward glance is like a rearview mirror in the car. It is important and it allows you to see behind you as you are driving forward.

But...if you drive staring at your rearview mirror, you will wreck. The car is designed to give you clear vision forward, so that you may move ahead to get where you are going, yet with an image of what is behind.

Driving a car down the road is like a timeline illustration. You are on the dot (in your car) and you are moving forward on the line while recognizing and knowing, and even learning from what is behind.

To the people of God, there is this essential reminder of those who have come before. Those in our rearview mirrors. Those who lived lives in challenging and very difficult circumstances. We get caught up in our own narrative – our own stories – where we are on center stage as the main character, but the Holy Spirit reminds us through this writing as he did to the first century Hebrew believers that many have come before and have sustained, in times more challenging than ours. They believed. They did not deconstruct and abandon the faith. Thus, they are listed – men and women of old, in the hall of faith for God’s glory and for our good.

This is for our good.

They had a faith in a future to come while they never lost sight of their present reality.

FAITH IN SPITE OF FAILURES

This is an interesting group now.

³ Schriener, Thomas R. *Hebrews: Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 369.

Hebrews 11:32-33

³² And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—⁴

These men of faith may not be the ones that first came to your mind. Likely this is true for the first listeners as well. Yet, each are in our rearview mirror.

Gideon was a warrior whom God stripped of a large army. He underwent a remarkable divestment of power for his phenomenal victory over the Midianites – an army shrunk from 32,000 to 300! Then, this army of 300 armed with trumpets and pitchers concealing torches routed the enemy.⁵

Barak, following the lead of God’s chosen leader Deborah, with a token army far outnumbered with men from just two of Israel’s tribes, defeated the great army of Sisera.⁶

Samson is not often thought of as a man of faith. He’s strong and impetuous and falls to temptation. That’s Samson. Promises were made to this strong man judge that would begin to save Israel from the Philistines.⁷

Jephthah is infamous for his foolish vow that cost the life of his own daughter. Yet, this one defined as an illegitimate son, an outcast Hebrew Robin Hood, was called back to save the nation of Israel which he did through faith.⁸

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:32.

⁵ Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 376.

⁶ Hughes, 377.

⁷ Schriener, 370.

⁸ Hughes, 377.

Of course there's David who committed adultery and tried to cover it up by orchestrating a murder.⁹

Samuel the prophet – one called as a little boy as a promise to his mother. Raised by a priest, surrounded by selfish, godless men who inherited the priesthood, but he himself a prophet. The anointer of king the people desired – Saul, but also of David.

What an interesting group of men to put in the final hallway of the hall of faith.

All in the rearview mirror. Were they perfect examples of faith? No. Martin Luther's dying words, which underscore our need, apply to them: "We are beggars. This is true."¹⁰

This group, viewed together are vastly different, but also have remarkable similarities when you look closer. Each lived in a time when faith was a rarity. It was scarce.¹¹ During the days of the judges, the scripture states...

Judges 21:25

²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. ¹²

Sometimes that which is in the rearview mirror looks much like that which is where we stand today.

The writer presumes, rightly so, that the readers are familiar with the stories and great sagas of the book of Judges, the books of Kings, and

⁹ Mohler, R. Albert, Jr. *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Christ in Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: Holman, 2017), 191.

¹⁰ Mohler, 191.

¹¹ Hughes, 377.

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jdg 21:25.

the prophets.¹³ They have read these Old Testament books. The characters referenced here need no in-depth description.

FAITH IN THE FOUNDATION

Who is this foundation? It is Jesus Christ.

As the writer encourages his readers, he does not present a sugar-coated view of faithfulness.

Perhaps the easy Christianity that is prevalent today is not new? Sadly, so many churches preach a gospel of good feelings. Many have been trained in what may have been called an evangelism strategy intent on getting people to repeat a prayer and say “I surrender all” without truly understanding what that means.

Thus, when the storms of life come...and they come...those whose houses of faith were built on good vibes, more prosperity, better circumstances, and a peaceful, easy feeling find that what they were built upon was not Christ at all, but a cheap copy.

What they were sold was not Christianity, but self-help.

What they desired in independence and freedom left them empty and enslaved.

Thus, church buildings close, passion for the gospel wanes, steadfastness evaporates. And in some cases, we have to ask “Was it ever real to begin with?”

So, as the preacher, the writer closes this chapter, he instructs the church to look once more in the rearview mirror, just so they are not victim of “good old days nostalgia”

¹³ Allen, Clifton J., et al. *Hebrews - Revelation: Broadman Bible Commentary*. Vol. 12, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1972,) 83.

Hebrews 11:33-38

³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ¹⁴

Perspective.

And after that quick glance backward, the Holy Spirit states this...

Hebrews 11:39-40

³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, **did not receive what was promised,** ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. ¹⁵

Though these saints of old received many, many promises, they did not receive the great promise – the coming of the Messiah and the salvation found in him. ¹⁶ They looked longingly forward for this.

The Old Testament faithful would not be perfected apart from the New Testament believers. They had great faith, but something better would come with the new covenant. That something better is Jesus Christ in his

¹⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:33–38.

¹⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:39–40.

¹⁶ Hughes, 382.

death, burial, and resurrection.¹⁷ Thus, we have this great gift to experience something better. Complete. Foundational for living.

“Made perfect” refers to the totality of Christ’s work, including both present forgiveness and vinal salvation.¹⁸

Faith in Christ alone gives us a future and hope. Through repentance removes us from our sin and failures and is foundational for our living now...as we remember the past, but look forward to a glorious homecoming.

¹⁷ Schriener, 374.

¹⁸ Peterson, David G. *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the “Epistle to the Hebrews.”* SNTSMS 47. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.) 156-7.