

God's Power and Providence

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- [0 : 00] Hebrews chapter 11. We're about to wrap up this study we've been doing on people whose names we do not know.
- ! Hebrews chapter 11 beginning at verse 36.
- Hebrews 11 verse 36. And others, notice that term others, had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment.
- They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with a sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy.
- They wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.
- [1 : 21] God, having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Let's have a word of prayer. Father, I pray this morning that you would just help us, Lord, as we look at this passage of Scripture and others, Lord, to be reminded that we all have a part to play in the kingdom of God.
- We all have a part in taking the gospel to those around the world. We all have a part in making known the gospel of Jesus Christ to those around us.
- Lord, I pray that you would use us. You'd help us to remember that you can use us. We think we may not have any talent. We may not have anything to offer. We may not be significant enough.
- But, Lord, we're part of the and others. Lord, help us to be used of you for what you desire to see done in this world. We pray this in Jesus' name.
- Amen. If you were to take all of the names in the Bible and list them, especially when you get to the genealogies and things there, you're going to have quite the list of names of people.
- [2 : 37] And some of them we know well. Paul, Moses, David. You know, those names we know well. But you notice this said, and others.
- And others. There are people whose, as we've been talking this whole time, people whose names we don't know. But they had a significant impact on the ministry of the gospel going out.
- Even in the Old Testament, they had an impact on the ministry of God's name being exalted and uplifted. We can do the same thing. We may not be famous, but we can do that.
- Hebrews chapter 11 gives us a whole list of names. As it talks about those who were famous because of their faith. Everybody in this list of chapter 11, it's because of their faith.
- We can all have faith. We can all do the things that God wants us to do by exercising our faith. Look back up there just a little bit. Look at verse 33. Notice what their faith did.

[3 : 45] Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. It says all of these people face all of these things, and they were able to do these different things because of the faith that they had.

How strong is your faith? How much faith do you have in what God is doing? You know, we don't want to ever forget the others. We don't ever forget that we're part of the others.

You ever have people that have been great names that have had an influence on your life? Think of somebody that maybe was a great name that had an influence on your life. I've been able to be in the presence of Ronald Reagan at one time when I was a student at Bob Jones.

He came and spoke, and I was there. I've been in the presence of... I have a picture. I don't know if it's in my office or at home.

[5 : 05] I have a picture of me sitting in a room with Bill Cohn, former Secretary of State. You know, I just... I have had contact. I have had contact with him.

You've had... On TV? Yes. On TV. Okay. But, you know, we have people like that that we have contact with sometimes.

But what about the others? Let me tell you about the others. I grew up in Palmyra, Maine. We were highly intelligent in Palmyra, Maine.

So intelligent in Palmyra, Maine that we did not have kindergarten. We didn't need it. We started with first grade. And first grade teacher was Mrs. Furbush.

I will never forget Mrs. Furbush. She had an impact on my life. She was quite the lady. I remember one day when a student was crying, and she could not get the student to stop crying and stuff.

[6 : 03] So she dumped out her wastebasket, put it back down, climbed inside the wastebasket so she would have a boat when the crying stopped, and she'd be floating away and got everybody laughing.

And so she was just... I remember that to this day. And that was 64 years ago. So five, six, no. Whatever.

It was a while ago. So anyway, Myron Link. None of you have ever heard of Myron Link. But I was in a service when I was 11 years old in Heartland, and we had an evangelist there by the name of John Goodhart.

And he preached on hell, and I did not want to go there. So at the end of the service, they had an invitation, you know, if you wanted to get saved. So I went forward, and Myron Link took me and showed me from the Word of God how I could know for sure that I was saved and what God's Word said about being saved.

Foster and Dale Brooks. You've never heard of them. They're brothers. We're brothers. They're both dead now. But I remember Foster Brooks, we went to his house, me and a guy named Al Ouellette.

[7 : 18] went to his house one day and invited kids to Vacation Bible School. And we got a very cold reception there. We don't want to hear anything about it.

Don't want to know anything about it. Just leave us alone. A couple years later, they got saved. And they became part of the church there. And Foster and Dale, like I said, were brothers.

They were Sunday school teachers for years and years and years. They were so faithful once they got saved. Jerry Williamson. Most people have not heard of Jerry Williamson.

He was a pastor in Fort Lauderdale. Huge impact on my life. Bill Snyder, Greg Turnbull. They were also in Fort Lauderdale. They were also in Alabama.

Bill's probably the best friend I have in the ministry. And Greg, probably right second. And just these people that nobody's ever heard of, but they had an impact on my life.

[8 : 20] You all have the same thing. You have people that nobody's ever heard of, but they had an impact. They had an influence. And through their faithful testimony, through their faithfulness in doing what God called them to do, they influenced and changed your life, my life, the different ones.

So he says these others had trials of cruel mockings and things. These others were persecuted. These others were martyrs for the faith. And we've come to learn so much about faith, so much about going through fires and trials and things because of these others that he mentions.

Can God trust us with trials? Can God trust us to go through things and be the example and show people this is how you do it according to the word of God.

This is how you do it when God's spirit is living within you. This is what you do. This is how you go about it. Think of Job. All the things that Job faced as you read through the book of Job.

Job 23.10 says, But he knoweth the way that I take. When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. As you go through things, how do you come out?

[9 : 40] God uses those things sometimes to try us to burn away some of the things that we have and as to make us more pure, to make us follow. What is our, how do we handle the things that come into our life?

Well, these people, these others, they kind of show us, for a better term or not, a persecution template. How do you handle things?

What do you do? You know, has there ever been a generation that has prayed and said, Oh God, please send us persecution. Please send us trials. Please send us, No, not if they've got a brain.

They're not praying for those things. They don't want those things in their life. If they can help it, they're not praying for it. You know, it's not something we look forward to. Not something we enjoy. But God allows it to come into our life to shape us and mold us and change us.

You know, sometimes when you first throw a lump of clay down and stuff, there might be some sharp edges in some things and it's going to mold it over, shape it over, smooth it out to make it what it ought to be.

[10 : 51] People in the Bible or in history were being persecuted at different times. What was that persecution to do? It actually aided to the growth of them and of the things going on around them.

You think back when Christianity first started, right after Jesus, was on the cross and ascended back into heaven, Christianity started to grow.

And in Jerusalem, it was where main places started to grow at the beginning. In Acts chapter 8, verses 1 through 4, listen to these verses.

And Saul was consenting unto his death. Okay, stop right there. This is chapter 8 of Acts. Chapter 7 of Acts, we have the martyrdom of Stephen. Stephen is killed for his stand for Christ.

And if you remember right, it says Saul was standing there watching the coats of the people who were throwing the stones. He was given his assent. He was given his permission.

[11 : 56] He's saying, yes, this is a good thing. Go for it. It says Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time, there was great persecution against the church, which was at Jerusalem.

And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles. The apostles stayed in Jerusalem. The apostles faced the persecution.

But a lot of other Christians went other places to avoid the persecution. Okay? Verse 2, And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him.

As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and hailing men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

These that had been in Jerusalem were facing persecution. They are now having to leave Jerusalem because of the persecution. and they're going out. But when they go out, what are they doing? They scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the word.

[13 : 04] You ever watch fires? You know, get a campfire or something going and you watch the little sparks go here and here and here and you keep an eye on them because they can start other fires.

That's what was happening in Jerusalem. The persecution was coming down trying to destroy it, trying to kill it, trying to, but as they did that, sparks were going other places.

Sparks were going out, starting other fires, starting other cities to have revival for the Lord Jesus Christ. One. My dad used to say that the one thing that would cause him to be a believer if nothing else was the fact that people were willing to die.

They were martyred for their faith in time. He said, if people are willing to die for something, you know it has to be. Yep. Although that's kind of a wonder about it.

Well, you know, it's funny because I was just thinking about that because I've heard that before too and it's like, well, what about the people of Islam? They're willing to die. And I just thought of the difference.

[14 : 13] They're willing to kill themselves. Christians are willing to allow others to kill them for their belief. If they want to make a decision to kill themselves, that's their decision.

But when you allow yourself to be a martyr, you know, and give your life up, let others take it, you know, different thing. So, one of the things about these people in Hebrews chapter 11, they had a notable past.

There's a common thread that goes through this whole thing. If you look at these people in Acts chapter 11, the one thing they have in common is they all face trials and temptations.

We all have those. Trials and temptations. 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 13. There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man.

We all face trials and temptations. We all face hardships. We all face things that we go through. How do we react to that? See, we've all had to overcome different difficulties and things, and God uses those difficulties to strengthen us.

[15 : 35] God uses those difficulties to develop us as his servants, as I said, to mold us and shape us into what he wants us to be. The apostle Paul, again, you remember, he talked about his thorn in the flesh.

He had a thorn in the flesh. In 2 Corinthians chapter 12, beginning at verse 7, 7 through 9, it says this, Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

So stop right there. Paul was receiving all kinds of things from God. Paul got to spend three years on the backside of the desert learning about who Jesus was and everything about him and everything that connected to the doctrines and things.

And he says, because I was able to do that, so I wouldn't be exalted above measure, God allowed Satan to get at me. He allowed him to buffet me.

He allowed him to come up against me at times so that I realized there's no way that I'm not doing this on my own. This is not my work. This is God's work. And it's only through God that it's going to happen.

[16 : 52] It's not by me. Verse 12, chapter 12, verse 8. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. I asked God three different times to take this thorn in the flesh away from me.

Verse 9. He said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee. My strength is made perfect in weakness. God said, look, Paul, you've got everything you need in me.

My strength is made perfect in your weakness. When people look at you and they see the things that you're going through and you're still able to do the things that you're doing, that gives glory to me.

People see that I'm working in a life. It is not all about you. It is about what God does. And it's the same for us. It's not about us. It's what God can do through us. He goes on in that verse and says, most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

He says, I go through these things so that people will see Christ, so that people will see his power, his glory, see him at work, not me.

[18 : 03] You ever, as a kid, did you ever watch butterflies come out of a cocoon? Did you ever try to help the butterfly come out of the cocoon? No, there's a chicken out of the egg.

The chicken out of the egg? I'm going to get that illustration in a second. When you, when a butterfly is trying to come out of the cocoon, don't help it.

Because as it does that, it's actually strengthening itself, it's infusing its wings and things, it's helping it to become the butterfly that it's supposed to be.

If you just open that cocoon up and let it go, it's probably going to die because it hasn't developed in the way it's supposed to. Same thing with the chicken coming out of an egg.

That effort that they put forth to come out of those things, the wings kind of fill themselves with some kind of liquid. I don't know all the details, but they fill themselves with some kind of liquid and it strengthens them and it helps them and gets them to the place where they can fly and do the things they need to do.

[19 : 11] Same thing with a rose. You can't force the devil. A rose? Okay. That one I did not know. So, God's trying to develop us.

Sometimes we go through things, but it's to help infuse us with his spirit and help us to realize that it is not my power, it is him working in me.

And so, I need to trust in him, not myself. And so, God allows that. Isaiah 5810, 4810, sorry, Isaiah 4810.

It says, Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver. I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

He says, I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction. Charles Spurgeon, wrote a book called Faith's Checkbook. It was a devotional type thing. And in that book, he talks about that phrase from Isaiah 4810.

[20 : 13] I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. Matter of fact, he had it made up as a plaque that hung in he and Susanna's bedroom. There was a plaque up there that said, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

And here's what he said about that phrase. God's choice makes chosen men choice men. We are chosen not in a palace but in the furnace.

He says, you're chosen not because you're in a palace and because you've got all these. No, you're chosen in the furnace as you go through things. It's not, you know, you think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

I'll talk about them later today. And they were in the furnace. But God showed up there with them and helped them through it all and got them out of it.

You think of Jesus. Comes from the throne of heaven. He wasn't born in a palace. He was born in a manger in a stable. God allows us to go through things.

[21 : 18] Why? So that God's choice makes chosen men choice men. I like that phrase that he used in. And then he gave a promise, a negative promise.

There's a negative promise given to us sometimes that we don't like. You know, the Bible's filled with promises and we like the promises of the Bible. The Bible says, oh, you do this and you're going to have this and you do this and you're going to have this and you do this and you're going to be able to, you know.

There's one, though, we don't like. 2 Timothy 3.12. 2 Timothy 3.12 says this, Yea, in all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall have all the wealth of the world.

No, that's not what it says. Those that live in Christ Jesus shall be the strongest people in the world. No. What does it say? All that live in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Shall suffer persecution. You know, if we're living according to what God wants us to do, people are not going to like us. And you know, that's so hard to figure out.

[22 : 29] I'm running out of time already. It's so hard to figure out. Jesus said in John 15, 18 and 19, says this, If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own. But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

You ever stop and think about those two verses? Why does the world hate Jesus? What did Jesus ever do to the world? Other than come and give his life for it?

Other than come and go to a cross for them so they wouldn't have to? What did Jesus do? That the world hates him? What did Jesus do that the world uses him as a swear word?

He revealed sin. That's a good one. Yep. He revealed their sin. But he also gave them a way to have forgiveness of that sin.

[23 : 34] But the world hates him. So this idea of persecution has been around for centuries and centuries and centuries. How do we make a difference?

It's how we react to the persecution that comes our way. In 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 23 it says this. It's talking about Jesus who when he was reviled reviled not again.

When he suffered he threatened not but committed himself to him that judges righteously. He didn't come back at people. He didn't threaten them.

When he was hanging on the cross he was not looking down on those Roman soldiers and those religious leaders and the others and going you guys just wait. Your day is coming. You wait till those fires are coming up all around you.

No he didn't do that did he? He said father forgive them for they know not what they do. You know we need to let God be the judge.

[24 : 38] He says committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Committed himself to the father. Going to do whatever he wants. I'm fulfilling his will and his purpose.

You know Jerry and I were talking yesterday about Joseph. You remember Joseph? Can you imagine having your brothers people who are supposed to love you part of your family?

They're thinking about killing you. Finally they come to their senses and say no we probably shouldn't kill him. So let's just sell him into slavery. That's so much better.

You know. And that's what they did with Joseph. And Joseph was mistreated in so many ways. But yet Joseph remained faithful to the Lord in whatever he was doing.

Joseph, when it's all said and done, you know the story. He comes second in command to Pharaoh and his brothers are there and they've gotten the food from him and stuff and everything.

[25 : 42] And finally Jacob dies and Genesis 50 verses 19 and 20. Genesis 50, 19 and 20. Joseph said unto them, fear not.

For am I in the place of God? It's not my call. It's God's call. Whatever God thinks you deserve, God will give it to you.

I'm not doing it. It's not my job. Above my pay grade. I may be second and on command to Pharaoh but it's above my pay grade. God's going to take care of it.

And in verse 20 he says this, but as for you, ye thought evil against me but God meant it unto good to bring to pass as it is this day to save much people alive.

God put me here, God put me in this place, not so I could get revenge on you guys, but so I could save people, so I could keep people alive. Joseph kept his eyes on God, following him, doing what he wanted and what does it say, talking about Joseph, what does it say, Jared, about Joseph's relationship to God?

[27 : 02] It was a loving relationship but there was a phrase that we were talking about. Anyway, God used him. God loved him, God used him in a mighty, mighty way.

We'll talk some more about this next week. We're out of time, so. But when it comes to facing persecution and things of that nature, let God be the judge.

Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, the Bible says, and just follow him. Let him do his way.