

Heroes of the Faith

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[0:00] Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11. It's a famous chapter of God's Word! God's heroes.

God's men and women. Heroes and heroines of the faith. God's true heroes of faithfulness. They're an inspiration to us. And so we're going to read this together. I'm just going to comment as we read through the chapter in a moment about these true heroes of the faith and how we can be inspired by their testimony, by their example.

They trusted God through all their experience of life despite their circumstances that they went through and it can stir our hearts too to faithfulness.

So faithfulness, the key word as we see through Hebrews 11 is faith. Faith. As it has been said, faith is forsaking all, I trust Him.

[1:15] Forsaking all else, I trust Him. Faith. It stands with courage. It stands and braves the opposition that might confront it and it makes choices to stand for God's truth and in faithfulness to Him.

And Hebrews 11 verse 6, it defines faith for us. Hebrews 11 verse 6, it tells us that without faith, man cannot please God.

Without faith, man cannot please God. It says, but without faith it is impossible to please Him. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

God will reveal Himself to the seeking heart. He is a rewarder of them that seek Him, that diligently seek Him. We can take heart in that today, the promise of Scripture.

And we'll read from verse 1 of Hebrews 11 and picture these people as we follow them, as we walk in their footsteps as it were, as these ones that demonstrate faith to the human race.

[2:23] And it says there from verse 1, Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It goes beyond our sight, beyond our human comprehension, beyond the tangible senses of our five senses.

It goes beyond that. Faith is beyond that which is visible. It goes beyond that which we can see. And it says, verse 2, For by it the elders obtain a good report.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. So firstly we see here, brothers and sisters tonight, that faith is faith in the Creator.

Faith that gains God's approval, that has that good report, acknowledges the Creator's handiwork in creation. The Word says here, that the worlds were made by God's command.

It was by the Word of God. He spoke and it became. God created the world through His power.

[3:39] And as we read in the Gospel of John, the Word made all things. Without Him was not anything made that was made.

And we know that then it says that the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.

The Word. We see Christ there in John chapter 1. We see the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit moved on the face of the deep. God created the heavens and the earth by His invisible power, by God's hand.

And faith, really, for all of us, it has to have that acknowledgement that we are in His image. We are made by His hand. And the world, the universe about us, is under His command.

Verse 4, it goes on. It starts to name some names here of the men and women of faith. And by faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of His gifts, and by it, him being dead, yet speaketh.

[4:55] So His example now speaks to us today. His example, even though now He is dead, His example speaks to you and me today, that faith is so central to all of life and makes sense of everything.

Faith is the essential component that makes life make sense. And Abel, it says, by faith, he offered a better sacrifice, a more excellent sacrifice.

What was Abel's sacrifice? It was a blood sacrifice. It was a blood sacrifice. Abel slew an animal to be the sacrifice to bring to the Lord.

And of course we can see how that sacrifice speaks to us in hindsight of Calvary. For Abel, it was in the future.

Calvary was in the future. But Abel presented the blood. The blood was evident there. And faith in the blood is critical, brothers and sisters.

[6:09] It's faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that saves you. It's faith in His blood, in His dying on your behalf, that saves your soul. It's not any working of our own.

It's purely that working of His, that finished work, that completed, that undertaken work, that once for all finished work of the blood shed at Calvary's hill.

And it says of Abel, he was declared righteous. Isn't that wonderful to think? That Abel, as he gave that blood sacrifice, in picture of the Calvary to come, of Christ's sacrifice, of Christ's blood shed for you and me, Abel was declared righteous because of the faith in the blood.

It goes on in verse 5. By faith, Enoch, another man of God. Enoch, it says, he was translated, he was taken off the earth to another world, to the heaven.

You know, what a wonder. Certainly, he was very special that Enoch would be translated, that he would be taken, that he should not see dead. And he was not found because God had translated him.

[7:26] For before his translation, before he was taken, he had this testimony that he pleased God. Enoch pleased God. How? By faith. By faith.

You know, we can try to please God, but without faith, we cannot please him, as it goes on, as we read earlier, verse 6. But without faith, it is impossible to please him. Impossible to please God without faith, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Do you please God? A question for you tonight. Do you please God? And how do you make that claim?

How do you make that claim that you please him? You know, you might try your very best, the very best a human being can try, but you will fail because all have come short of the glory of God.

Not one does good. No, not one. There is none righteous. No, not one of us. By any doing of our own, by any seeking to please him of our own, but by faith, Enoch pleased God.

[8:38] He had that testimony. He had that witness. And you too can please God. How? By faith. By putting your trust in Christ, in the finished work, in the bloodshed, in his act of taking God's wrath and anger against your sin.

That the fury was vented at Calvary's tree. That the fury and wrath and anger of God was paid for because it was poured out on the Son of God.

So please God, can it be said of you, I pray, I urge you, if you haven't, to trust him. Trust him. That's the answer. To trust him.

In faith, responding to his grace. Trust him. Trust him. Hebrews 11, 7. It goes on. Another man of God, Noah. By faith, Noah, being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house.

He prepared an ark for the saving of his household, of his family, by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

[9:49] Again, righteousness is by faith. Righteousness is by faith. By faith, Noah, he heard, he obeyed.

God commanded an ark to be built. In this desert place, in this wilderness, where no rain had fallen, the world didn't know rain as we would understand it.

And yet, here he was in the middle of the wilderness, God said, build an ark for the saving of your family, for the saving of those who will be saved.

And the preacher of righteousness he's called in the scriptures, how many hated him? Only eight were saved. Noah and his own children, Noah and his wife and his own children and their spouses. Friends tonight, Noah, preached for years, was it? How many? Hundreds of years, wasn't it? I'm a bit sketchy on the detail there. But I know it was certainly a long period of time preaching, I'd imagine, day after day.

[10:58] Certainly, at every opportunity, I'd picture Noah there standing as they were knocking away, putting this ark together. and what a scorn he would have suffered.

What a mockery. What a laughing stock he would have been to the world of his day. He was preaching righteousness. He was preaching righteousness by faith. He was preaching that the ark was the place of safety from the doom to come and yet they would not listen.

And thank God, Noah heard he was divinely warned of things not yet seen. He heard God. He was warned of the judgment to come. He didn't keep it to himself. He warned his world too.

Those that were here sadly were few. But he warned of the judgment to come and he took heed. He acted in obedience. And what does the ark picture? Again, it pictures the blood sacrifice.

It pictures the person of our Saviour. The ark was Christ. The ark, to us, it pictures that place of safety. Where is the place of safety? From the wrath of God. It's under his shelter.

[11:59] It's in his person. It's in the person of Christ. Noah was warned of something that had never happened before. By faith, Noah was moved with godly fear. He took action.

He was activated. And real faith takes action. It gets active. It's alive. It's living. It takes action. And Noah, he condemned the world, the preacher of righteousness, righteousness, which is by faith.

It goes on to another account, another hero, another hero, as it were, yet really, just ordinary, everyday people, really and truly, you could say, because if you had been in that day, perhaps it would have been you that would have been chosen to be the Abraham, to be the Noah.

That would be such a blessing, wouldn't it? Because we know that of these, even Noah, you know, the Bible tells it, warts and all, he made some errors too. He was faulty and failing of himself.

And yet, God blessed him with salvation. By faith, Abraham, verse 8, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, he obeyed.

[13:08] He went out, not knowing whether he went. By faith, he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

For he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. Abraham, what set him apart? Faith. By faith, Abraham. By faith, Abraham, he looked for a city.

He was preparing for that city, a city designed and built by God. He was looking forward to that heavenly city, that place built, prepared for God's people, the saints of God.

Abraham, as it were, saw it by faith. He claimed it by faith. He was looking for it. He had that desire for heaven. He looked for that city which hath foundations.

Are you looking for that city tonight? Do you want to be in that city of gold? That city where the land will be the light thereof. Won't it be wonderful there?

[14:12] Joy unspeakable and full of glory. It hasn't entered into the heart of mind of man to the things that God has prepared for them that love him.

You know, heaven. What a shame to live on this sinful planet and miss heaven. What a tragedy. What a tragic loss. What a waste of a life.

God forbid that that should be said of you. Abraham was looking for that city whose builder and maker is God. He went out not knowing whether he went.

It's a bit like me sometimes. I get in the car trying to find some place and I get lost. But Abraham, he was looking for a city. He didn't know where it was but he was looking for it.

And thank God he found it by faith. He found the righteousness in Christ. He had a new destination. It goes on verse 11 it talks of Sarah who received strength to conceive seed was delivered of a child when she was past age.

[15:16] Sarah! God worked a miracle. The wonder of wonders that this very old lady should bring forth a child and this child should be the child of promise. The child of whom it is said there in verse 12 that it would be have descendants as stars of the sky in multitude.

Sarah! By faith! She received strength. Sarah! By faith! Trusted in the God who works wonders. She trusted in the one with the promise.

Hebrews 11 13 it goes on that these all died in faith not having received the promises but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. They seek a country. Not the sense of they seek a homeland. Now the sense of this word country has got the sense of homeland.

That's our home. This world is not my home. As the chorus goes I'm just a passing through. The real home the place where we belong our residence where we reside is heaven where our citizenship is found is in that country that we see.

[16:34] And so in verse 16 they desire a better country and that is a heavenly wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he had prepared for them a city. God is making a city.

He's making it ready for those who are going to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Don't put your tent pegs down too hard in this soil. We're passing on. You might have a lovely home a mansion or plans of one but don't put your claim on that don't put your heart in that there's a place to come there's a heaven to come there's a better country but it's only made possible by the blood of Christ.

It's only made possible because of his shed blood as you trusted them as you realised that we're really just a stranger here. We're really from another country. We're an alien.

We're a stranger. A pilgrim just passing through him just travelling just sojourning desiring that better country that city that God has prepared for those who love him.

Now verse 17 it tells us of Abraham offering up Isaac through to verse 22 we see Abraham's faith demonstrated there as he was tested by God to give Isaac his son can you picture that as he was there about to strike his son to death in obedience to God and God provided a lamb God provided himself a lamb for Abraham Abraham's faith was demonstrated it was active it was evident sacrificial faith goes on verse 23 verse 23 Moses when he was born he was hit three months of his parents they saw he was a proper child they wanted to care for him they were not afraid of the king's commandment it didn't daunt them that the king the pharaoh had said that these children should be slaughtered they obeyed God they saved the child

[18:45] Moses and then it says verse 24 when he was come to years Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season what a testimony Moses had that he would prefer to suffer than to enjoy the pleasures of sin is that true for you or are the pleasures of sin too attractive to take you away to draw your love and affection that you miss that which really matters that which really counts that which is forever better to suffer for Christ for a season than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season to suffer for Christ and then to see heaven if you suffer for him you're going to reign with him and we see the persecuted church as testimony of that of the wonder of that and then we see how God led Moses through the

Red Sea as it describes there and the Egyptians were attempting to go through they were drowned verse 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season Moses by faith he made a choice he said choosing rather to suffer than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season he wanted to be with the people of God he wanted to identify with God's people to leave Egypt the world and its toys and trinkets and attractions that which would draw aside and away from Christ he wanted to be with God's people by faith Hebrews 11 30 by faith Jericho the walls fell down Joshua by faith he acted and God intervened the walls fell down verse 31 another woman now by faith the harlot Rahab commended this prostitute perish not with them that believe not when she had received the spies with peace this prostitute is commended why

because of faith faith made the difference for her faith made the difference for one who could be discarded as worthless as vile as valueless as rubbish tossed aside on the rubbish heap of the world by faith

God saved this woman she trusted in God the account tells us that she declared in Joshua 2 verse 11 he is God in heaven above and on earth beneath she testified of faith in the saving grace of God no matter what the cost she identified with the people of God she was willing to trust him and there was proof of her faith and as she hung the scarlet cord down as a sign to the attacking Israelites it was a sign as some have pictured it as early commentators have seen it to reflect a symbol of the blood of Christ the scarlet thread the scarlet cord a symbol of the saving grace of the wonderful working of God's grace at Calvary the blood of Christ again and it goes on in verse 32 there's so many more we can talk of as we read here of

Gideon of Barak of Samson of Jephthah of David of Samuel of the prophets it says verse 33 who through faith they subdued kingdoms these were more than a conqueror they conquered kingdoms they wrought righteousness they had acts of righteousness they obtained promises they stopped the mouths of lions they quenched the violence of fire they escaped the edge of the sword what an action movie this would make they escaped the edge of the sword you know Hollywood could make something big out of this but Hollywood is not scarcely interested as we know out of weakness they were made strong they waxed valiant in fight mighty in battle these men and women of God they turned to flight the armies of the aliens out of weakness they were made strong you know we can see of Gideon he destroyed the idols Barak led the people of Israel in a dramatic victory but there was times that

Gideon doubted he doubted God Barak hesitated it was only when Deborah urged him Samson is listed here but he never really lived up to his potential by faith yet he was weak Jephthah was used of God to defeat the Ammonites yet Jephthah made a mistake of a foolish vow David was listed a remarkable man of faith yet he failed too with Bathsheba now we can take heart but these heroes of the faith were frail ordinary men and women faulty failing yet by faith God worked in their hearts by faith despite their failures God commends these ones and lists them in the hall of faith God's hall of faith it goes on of women receiving their debt raised to life again others tortured not accepting deliverance they were tortured to death commended for their faith we see that in the reformation in the dark ages of the world where God's men and women read

[24:34] Fox's book of martyrs if you want a good thriller I know some of you might like to read thrillers and action stories read Fox's book of martyrs read the real accounts of what the priests did in the name of God supposedly but not the God of the Bible the antichrist of the inquisition tortured and punished to the dead God's men and women but by faith they went through the torture cruel mockings and scourgings bonds and imprisonment verse 37 they were stoned sawn asunder cut in half in other words cut in half I don't know which way they cut them but they were cut in half tempted slain with the sword wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins being destitute no they didn't have the prosperity gospel these people afflicted tormented brothers sisters these are the people of

God the people of faith friends tonight the world was not worthy of them we read we think of the persecuted church of recent days the persecuted church men and women in other lands even now even this very day are suffering for Christ in imprisonment torture and punishment and persecution even in our land the some who are persecuted for simply raising their voices in the public places to declare the name of Jesus of the saving gospel God forbid in the city of churches that our land is just as guilty and just as godless as communist and heathen lands friends tonight by faith by faith they obtained a good report through faith verse 39 have you got a good report it means a good testimony have you got a good report it's by faith you might fail like David failed you might fail like Gideon with doubt like Samson with temptation you might fail but by faith you can know the saving grace of

God by faith you can know what it is to please God not by any working of your own not of works of righteousness that we have done but according to his mercy he saved us not of works lest any man should boast by faith God's grace can bring salvation and friends tonight I can only urge you with a plea that God by his mercy would extend his hand to you and that you would extend your hand to him you can extend your hand like that to God or you can extend your hand like that what will you

