

Guided Bible Study: Week 15

June 27-July 3, 2020

During the time we could not have Sunday School and Wednesday Bible Study due to the Corona Virus emergency, Rick has been posting a guided Bible study on here to help fill the void left by not having those classes. We encourage you to read the passages in the Bible together with your family. **SINCE SUNDAY SCHOOL IS RESUMING ON JUNE 28 AND WE DON'T HOLD WEDNESDAY CLASSES DURING THE SUMMER, THIS MIGHT BE THE LAST OF THIS SERIES.** There definitely will not be one published on July 4 due to Rick being on vacation. We will see how Sunday School attendance shapes up compared to the number of Covid-19 cases in our immediate area and decide whether to pick this series up the following week.

HEBREWS, Chapter 11

The 11th chapter of Hebrews is often called the “Hall of Fame of the Faithful”. Quite a number of Old Testament characters are mentioned for their faith put to steadfast action. It builds off the platform the writer left at the end of chapter 10 when he wrote of Christians, *“But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.”* (Hebrews 10.39) The actions of those mentioned in Chapter 11 move us to have such an active, steadfast faith as well.

Since the Covid-19 restrictions ended my Wednesday night Bible Study class just before we started this chapter, I decided to share commentary about it via these means. The length of the chapter and the depth of the material will cause me to take probably three weeks to cover the chapter. I hope it will bring a bit of closure for my Wednesday students but will also be of general interest for all of you since it is so applicable to our daily walk with God. As I list the verse or verses being considered, please read them in the Bible. **Since this is the third installment of the Hebrews 11 series of lessons, if you did not study the Week 13 and 14 lessons, it would likely benefit your understanding if you would go through them before launching into this one. I am simply picking up where I left off, last week.**

Hebrews 11.29: Could the Israelites have had stronger faith and not grumbled and expressed fear when they saw the Egyptian Army approaching their encampment at the Red Sea? Certainly! Nevertheless they ended up exercising and displaying faith. They had to trust God to keep the water walled up so they could cross. They had never seen nor heard of anything like this before. Then what about the pursuing army? They didn't know in advance God was going to drown them. The Israelites' faith, however, was rewarded as the waters fell on the Egyptian Army and wiped it out.

Hebrews 11.30: At West Point they don't teach God's battle plan for the conquest of Jericho. What a goofy plan from an earthly military perspective! This new generation of Israelites, removed from the Red Sea crossing by forty years, trusted God to give them the city and He did.

Hebrews 11.31: Rahab's faith in hiding the Israelite spies saved her life and that of her family. (We read about this in the book of Joshua.) We usually assume Rahab departed from her former employment. She was certainly led by her faith to cast her lot with God's people, Israel, rather than her own people. As a result her life was spared and she ended up in the genealogy of Christ.

Hebrews 11.32-38: The writer now gives a summary of a number of other heroes of faith, some well-known, and others less so.

Gideon: Gideon was the fifth Judge of Israel. He fought against the worship of Baal. He also used only 300 men out of an army of 32,000 to defeat the Midianites. (See Judges 6.11-8.32.)

Barak: Deborah the prophetess called Barak to help her lead Israel when the Israelites were oppressed by Jabin, king of Canaan, and Sisera, captain of the host. The enemy had 900 chariots and oppressed Israel for twenty years. With Deborah and 10,000 men, Barak led Israel to a complete victory. (See Judges 4.1-5.31.)

Samson: Some commentators think verses 33 and 34 of this chapter, in whole or in part, refer to his accomplishments. Though not the "godliest" of Bible heroes, Samson nonetheless had faith to do some remarkable feats of strength in defending God's people.

Jephthah: This son of Gilead by a concubine became the ninth judge of Israel. His victories over the Ammonites and the Ephraimites in Judges 11.1-12.7, accomplished with faith in God, ranks him among the heroes of faith in this chapter.

David: David's faith is seen in his many victories for the Lord. One of the most dramatic is his first, against the giant, Goliath, whom he slew with just a shepherd's sling and a smooth stone. Under this hero of faith and "man after God's own heart", Israel became the prominent nation in the region. Many of David's Psalms express his faith. An example is seen in (read) **Psalms 18.6-19.**

Samuel and the prophets: The prophets had faith and commitment to preach in wicked and wayward times. Their actions and messages recorded for us provide lessons in faith and faithfulness.

Who through faith conquered kingdoms: David comes to mind here as does Joshua. Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah also come to mind. All achieved significant victories against enemy nations in their time.

Administered justice: This work was the main concern of the prophets who cried out against sin and for the establishment of justice. Elijah and Elisha come to mind as do certain of the

“writing” prophets who cried out for social justice. Josiah, among the kings, as he re-established the Law, also comes to mind here.

Gained what was promised: Joshua and Caleb obtained the promised land after forty years. Isaiah saw Jerusalem delivered from the invasion of Sennacherib. Daniel saw the end of the Babylonian captivity. Nehemiah lived to see the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt. Abraham received the promised son. David was promised the kingdom and received it. We could cite other examples.

Shut the mouths of lions: Daniel immediately comes to mind but some others did this as well. David had a victory over the lion and the bear (**See I Samuel 17.34.**) Samson, in Judges 14.6, killed a young lion with his bare hands. Benaiah, one of David’s mighty men, slew a lion in the midst of a pit in a time of snow (**See I Chronicles 11.22.**)

Quenched the fury of the flames: This refers to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel, chapter 3.

Escaped the edge of the sword: David escaped the sword many times from, among others, Saul and Goliath. Elijah did in **I Kings 19.1-16**, as Jezebel sought to bring him to the same fate as he had meted out on the prophets of Baal. Elisha escaped it from both the king of Aram and, later, the king of Israel. (**See II Kings 6.**) Jeremiah also escaped the sword in **Jeremiah 36.26**.

Whose weakness was turned to strength: Gideon trembled when he was called. Jeremiah said he was like a child. He couldn’t speak but was made able to speak. The enemies made fun of Nehemiah’s efforts to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem but build he did!

Who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies: Gideon with 300 men conquered the hosts of Midian. Abraham with 318 men rescued Lot. Joshua had many victories including the defeat of the Amalekites in Exodus 17 and the defeat of the Amorites in the long day (**See Joshua 10.12-13**).

Women received back their dead, raised to life again: In **I Kings 17.21** Elijah raised the son of the widow at Zarephath. In **II Kings 4.34** Elisha raised the Shunamite’s son.

Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection: Not only Bible characters but many others in Israel’s history could be referred to here. Torture seemed a small thing when they were seeking the resurrection to eternity with God. Faith gives the strength to endure. [DISCUSS: Would you have the faith to endure torture to stay true to Jesus?]

Some faced jeers and flogging: The Philistines mocked Samson. (**See Judges 16,25.**) Jeremiah was cruelly treated and mocked by Pashar and others. (**See Jeremiah 22.2-7; 33.2-3.**) Isaac was mocked by Ishmael. Elisha was mocked by children. There were the jeers of the enemy army surrounding Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah and Isaiah. Goliath made fun of David. Our faith

must overcome our fear of being ridiculed and spoked against when standing for God and what is right. [Read and Discuss: **Matthew 5.11-12.**]

Still others were chained and put in prison: Joseph was cast into prison. Ahab imprisoned Micaiah. (See I Kings 22.27.)n Jeremiah was lowered into a dungeon of mire. (See Jeremiah 37.16; 38.6.) Perhaps remembering these people of faith enabled an imprisoned Paul, hundreds of years later, to write: II Timothy 4.7-8 (read). [DISCUSS: How about us? Do we let our faith form our response to difficulty?]

They were stoned: An example is Zechariah the son of Jehoiada. Joash, king of Judah, had him stoned in II Chronicles 24.20-22.

They were sawed in two: The Bible does not say so, but Jewish tradition, as recorded in the Talmud, says Isaiah was sawed in two by the order of Manasseh.

They were put to death by the sword: (See I Kings 19.10). Elijah made this charge in a complaint to God. Jehoiakim slew the prophet Uriah in Jeremiah 26.23.

They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated: This was typical of at least some of the prophets. Elijah and Elisha were often mistreated.

The world was not worthy of them: Such cruel and ungodly men as persecuted the prophets did not deserve such good examples of faithful men. Do we live such examples of lives of faith that this could ever be said of us. [Discuss]

They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground: These were places of refuge for persecuted people of faith, driven from their homes by persecution.

Hebrews 11.39: God congratulates these people for their faith and rewards these heroes. Yet the ultimate reward for faith did not come during either earthly lifetimes. God had promised to bless all the nations through the line of Abraham. God had promised One on Whom the iniquity of us all would be laid. (See Isaiah 53.)

Hebrews 11.40: We often would like to have experienced some of the great Old Testament highlights. These heroes, on the other hand, would have gladly traded places with us. What we experience daily in Christ; total redemption from sin, Christ's intercession, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Christ's promise to come again, the fellowship of the church, the completed Scriptures; all are **BETTER** than what they had. The reward for their faith is made complete by what Christ has done and what we experience and will experience in Him. This should motivate our faithfulness in conduct and service.