

Exemplars of Faith
Hebrews 11:32-38

Introduction

1. The section of Hebrews which we have been studying began with Hebrews 10:19 and goes through chapter 12:29, and it is titled: “A Call to Follow Jesus Faithfully and with Perseverance”
2. This section is broken up in the following outline
 - a. Persevering in Faith under Pressure...Hebrews 10:32-12:3
 - b. Faith and its many outstanding examples...Hebrews 11:1-40 which has the following division
 - i. The nature of faith and the honor faith reflects on those who live by faith...
Hebrews 11:1-3
 - ii. Examples of those who lived, suffered, and died in faith as they relied on the strength of God’s grace...Hebrews 11:4-31 which is divided into two parts.
 - 1) Part I is Examples of faith...Hebrews 11:4-31
 - 2) Part II is Exemplars of Faith...Hebrews 11:32-38
3. The difference between example and exemplar
 - a. An example is something that is representative of all such things in a group
 - i. An example can be either good or bad
 - ii. The men and women which we have examined to this point are good examples for you as people of faith.
 - b. Exemplar is something fit to be imitated
 - i. Exemplar is ideal
 - ii. Exemplar is a model.
 - iii. An exemplar is always a person, and is specifically a good example to be imitated.
4. Introduction to these exemplars of faith.
 - a. We have studied the actions of faith of those people mentioned through v31.

- b. Now in v32, we find that the writer concludes this chapter by summarizing some events and names of people and actions of faith which are to be imitated by you and I.
- c. He begins v32 with these words: “What shall I say more? Time would fail me.”
 - i. The writer is saying that he does not have the time to mentions all those who acted in faith
 - ii. Neither does he have the time to discuss their victories
 - iii. The writer does in v32 mentions by name six more people of faith, and then bundles all the prophets into the phrase “of the prophets.”
- d. Let us learn the following from this writer
 - i. After all our researches into the scripture, there is still more to be learned from them.
 - ii. We must consider what we should say and consider the time we have to say it.
 - iii. We can learn that there are many more people of faith throughout the Old Testament that are examples or exemplars for us as we live a life of faith in the New Testament
 - iv. Let us consider our own faith as to whether or not we could fit into a “faith hall of fame” as these did, and if not, then why is our faith so weak?

Note Hebrews 11:32-38

32) And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33) Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. 34) 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. 35) Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36) And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37) They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38) (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

I. Let us look at the individuals that the writer mentions in this summary

A. Gideon

Note: The complete story of Gideon can be found in Judges 6-8

1. Gideon is a well-know instrument God used to deliver His people from the Midianites

2. Israel was being oppressed by the Midianites
 - a. They were being oppressed because they had forsaken God for idols
 - b. Sin brings about oppression for sin makes an opening for Satan's entrance
 - i. Judges 6:7 tells us that Israel cried out to the Lord for help
 - ii. In Judges 6:8-10, God responds to Israel's cry by sending a prophet to remind them of His blessings and deliverance that they had experienced and enjoyed, and v10 ended with these words, "but ye have not obeyed my voice."
 - c. The oppression by the Midianites had been ongoing for seven years...Judges 6:1
 - d. At harvest time, the Midianites would come to take their harvest, and the Amalekites, and children of the east would accompany them as part of their army.
 - e. The Midianite army that fought with Gideon numbered 135,000...Judges 8:10
3. An angel of the Lord appears to Gideon with a word from God...Judges 6:11

Note: This Angel of the Lord seems to have been Christ pre-incarnate for v16 reads, "And the Lord said..." This indicates that this was not an angel, but the Lord

- a. In v12, the Lord said to Gideon, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour."
- b. Gideon's response in v13...If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?
 - i. Where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?
 - ii. Now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.
- c. In v14, God tells Gideon to go and save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, and Gideon responds in v15 with these words.
 - i. Wherewith shall I save Israel?
 - ii. Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and
 - iii. I am the least in my father's house.
4. Like Gideon, we may feel inadequate, but the same words spoken to Gideon are spoken to us as well, and those words are "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of war."
5. Gideon responded to God's call, but he did it hesitantly

1st. He tore down his father's baal god and destroyed the grove, and then built an altar to the Lord in its place where he offered sacrifice to God

2nd. Gideon, when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, blew a trumpet, and the men of his clan came to him.

3rd. Gideon sent messengers throughout the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and 32,000 men of war came to meet him.

a. Gideon was still hesitant, so he presented two fleeces before God to make sure

Note: Placing a fleece before the Lord is fine, but there should come a time where we have grown spiritual to such a place that we know what God wants from His voice without having God to prove it with a fleece.

b. God assured Gideon through His fleeces that God was with Him

4th. Gideon follows God's direction in faith

a. Gideon, you have too many men, so tell all those scared to go home, and 22,000 left

b. Gideon, you have too many men, so take them to the brook to get a drink, and those who drink while watching for the enemy, keep, but send the others home which resulted in 9700 leaving which left Gideon with a three hundred man army against 135,000 man army.

c. Gideon is still hesitant, so God sends him to spy out the camp where he hears two men talking about a dream, and the one man says that Gideon will defeat the Midianite army.

d. Gideon makes his battle plans which involves the following

1st Faith

2nd. Unity

3rd. Obedience

4th. Togetherness as one which of course is unity

5th. God gave the victory

a. The odds were 450 to 1 in favor of the enemy

b. Let us understand though, that God works in the impossible, for with God there are no impossible odds.

Note: This same lesson of faith applies to you and I today, for God is still the same, so put these Scriptures into your heart to build your faith to face your battle

i. Let us begin by using what we have

1) Elisha asked the widow in 2nd Kings 4:2...What hast thou in the house?...She used what she had by faith at the word of Elisha, and God worked a miracle.

2) Ecclesiastes 9:10...Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;

3) In Exodus 4:2, we find God asking Moses “What is that in thine hand?,” and Moses respond, “A rod.” With that rod Moses accomplished great miracles as he used what was in his hand.

ii. 1st Samuel 14:6b...For there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.

iii. Matthew 19:26...With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

iv. Mark 9:23...If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

v. Luke 18:26...The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

vi. Mark 11:22-24

22) And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23) For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24) Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

vii. Matthew 18:19

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

viii. John 15:7

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Note: Many of us are wishing for something to use in God’s work, when God wants us to use what we have, then He will anoint it which will bring about miracles as we move in faith.

Note: Gideon was a hesitant deliverer, but God used Him, so God can use you.

i. Are you struggling with your faith...God can use you

- ii. Are you struggling with self confidence...God can use you
- iii. Are you letting your past defeat you...God can use you
- iv. It is time for you and I, who are of the like passions as Elijah and Gideon and other men, rise up to be people of faith using what we have for the glory of God.
 - 1) I want a great recording system with someone that has the technology to use it for God's great glory, but I do not have that, so we will use the ipad pro that was purchased for the church.
 - 2) I would love to have a large band worshipping God with an anointed, gifted choir, but we do not have that
 - a) We do have an anointed praise leader who has given himself in prayer and practice to lead and play a guitar for God's glory, and we will use that for that is what is in our hand
 - b) We do have a gifted talented piano player who has given her talents to the Lord, and we will use her to touch hearts for God's glory
 - c) We do have a drummer who has given himself to practice and dedication so that he can be at his best, and we will use him to touch lives for God's glory
 - d) We do not have a choir, but we have gifted singers in the praise team who love God and sing under the anointing, so we will use them to lead us into God's presence
 - 3) Where we are with what we go, we lift up the name of the Lord in Faith, and God will take what we offer from our hand and anoint it to defeat the enemy that stands against us "if God be for us, who can be against us."
- 6. God called and commissioned Gideon, then enabled him for the task
 - a. God has called and commissioned us, and He enables us for the task
 - b. Let us not bemoan our situation, but look to what we have at hand
 - i. Place what we have in the Lord's hand, and let Him use it
 - ii. Surrender self to God, and let Him use us
 - iii. Stop putting ourselves down, but realize that we are in His image, His likeness, with God given power and authority to exercise dominion, so rejoice and shout for like Gideon, the victory is ours as we move as one in unity against the enemy.

B. Barak was mentioned from Judges 4

1. God used Barak to deliver Israel out of the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan
2. Deborah, a prophetess of the Lord, gave Barak his marching orders from the Lord.

Note: Deborah was a judge and prophetess. A prophetess would be a woman preacher today.

3. Barak, like Gideon and like many of us, was hesitant, for he refused to go to battle without Deborah, but he did go and through him God gave deliverance
4. Barak obtained great victory over Sisera, but because of hesitancy, a woman got the credit for taking General Sisera's life.
5. In chapter 5, Barak joined Deborah in singing a song of praise to God for victory
 - a. v2...Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.
 - b. v3...Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.

Note: The people must offer themselves before victory came, and it is still the same today, for God does nothing on earth without the involvement of mankind, so when we offer ourselves and offer what we have to God, then God can take our offering to obtain a great victory. Who will offer themselves with by declaring, "Here I am Lord, use me." If you can use anybody, you can use me.

6. Let us understand this about true faith
 - a. True faith will always return all praise and glory to God
 - b. True faith recognizes that God is our only recourse in battles we face, so in return, we give God our praise in honor of Him giving us victory.

C. Samson is one of those mentioned in this summary

1. You can read the full story of Samson in Judges 13-16.
2. Samson was used to deliver Israel from the Philistines
3. Samson and Samuel were contemporaries according to Reese's Chronological Bible.
 - a. Samson was born in 1126 B.C, and Samuel were born in 1115 B.C
 - b. Samson's death, age 52, occurred at about 1074 B.C. which is recorded in Judges 16,

- c. The time of Samson's death corresponds with 1st Samuel 7:3-14 where Samuel gained a great victory over the Philistines which established Samuel as leader of Israel until his death at the age of 88 in the 1027 B.C.

Note: I probably would not have chosen Samson as a candidate for the "Faith Hall of Fame," but the writer did, so let us look at Samson and his faith.

4. Consider these remarks about Samson, and apply them to our lives

- a. Samson had to have faith in the Lord to do what he did
- b. It is by faith that we the servants of God overcomes the roaring lion, satan, so by faith as the Spirit of the Lord moved him, Samson killed a lion as it attacked him

Note: The lion still roars and attacks us today, but when we resist him in the Lord, he flees.

- c. True faith is acknowledged and accepted, even when mingled with many failings.

Note: Aren't you thankful?

- d. The faith of the believer will endure to the end
 - i. Samson in prison remembered his faith in God
 - ii. Samson exercised his faith in his dying
 - iii. Samson's faith gave him victory over death and all his deadly enemies
 - iv. Samson gained his greatest conquest by dying.

Note: What does that say to us this evening?

D. Jephthah is mentioned in this summary from Judges 11

Note: We need to take notice that this group of people in the "Faith Hall of Fame" are unique and colorful, for Jephthah was an outlaw, yet here he is as a hero of faith.

1. God used Jephthah to deliver Israel from the Ammonites.
2. Haven't you noticed that God always has a deliverer or deliverance for every occasion.

Note 1st Corinthians 10:13

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

3. Consider these comments about Jephthah

- a. God's grace finds us and fastens upon us even those we may be undeserving, and in Jephthah's case, he was the son of a harlot, disowned by his brothers.
- b. God's grace of faith will cause men to acknowledge God in all their ways as Jephthah "uttered or rehearsed all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh" in Judges 11:11.
- c. The grace of faith will make men bold and venturesome in a good cause, as they step out in faith.
- d. Faith moves us to commit ourselves to God and to follow through on the commitment as God's grace enables us to do all things through Christ who strengthens us.
- e. Faith moves us to follow through on our vows even when it seems to be a sacrifice to do so

E. David, that great man after God's own heart is one of those mentioned in the summary

Note: I would have thought that David would have been mentioned as honored as Moses was, for David was a great man of faith, yet he was human subject to sin and failure if he did not keep his eyes on God.

1. David was not present when Samuel arrived, but had to be called, for whatever reason, his father did not initially invite him to the feast.
2. God chooses David and Samuel anoints him to be king after Saul
3. David by faith slew a lion and a bear
4. David learned that the Lord was his Shepherd, which enabled David to make his declaration of faith to Goliath just before Goliath sunk to the ground having been felled like a tree by a stone from David's sling

Note 1st Samuel 17:45-47

45) Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. 46) This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47) And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.

5. David went through a long period of sacrifice and suffering before becoming king, but during this time, he did not lose his integrity, nor his faith in God.

6. David's faith and desire for God's presence moved him to repentance after being confronted with his sin

Note: Even though David had committed sins worthy of death, God still forgave and blessed him because God honored David's faith which led him to repentance as seen in Psalms 51

7. David's faith and faithfulness toward God and love for God moved God to say that David was a man after God's own heart.
8. David ended his life in faith challenging his son Solomon and all of Israel to seek, serve, and know the Lord, for the earnest seeker will find the Lord.

F. Samuel is also mentioned in this summary of faith people

- a. The story of Samuel is found in 1st Samuel.
- b. Samuel's mother was a woman of faith, and she displayed that faith by believing the words of Eli the high priest when he told her God would grant her request.
- c. Samuel's mother gave him to the Lord at an early age, so Samuel was raised in the "House of the Lord" to be a man of God
- d. God revealed Himself to Samuel when Samuel was a lad, and God continued to reveal Himself to Samuel till his death.
- e. God used Samuel to be a distinguished prophet of the Lord to Israel, and to be a ruler over Israel.
- e. Consider these thoughts
 - i. Children raised in the Lord who are encouraged to seek the Lord and to exercise faith have a tendency to become people of faith

Note: We have an impact on our children.

- ii. From Samuel, we learn that when we are used of God to reveal God's mind and will to others, we must be well established in the faith and belief ourselves.

G. Then the writer in his summary adds these words after Samuel, "and of the prophets."

1. The prophets were ministers of the Old-Testament church
2. The prophets were used of God to proclaim judgment, to promise mercy, to reprove sin, to foretell future events that were known only to God
3. The prophets were also used to speak of the coming Messiah

- a. They told of His persona and offices, what He would be like and what offices He would hold
 - b. They spoke of the Messiah, because Christ was the center of the law and the prophets
4. To declare with confidence what doth saith the Lord, the prophets had to be men and women of extraordinary faith.

II. After summarizing people of faith, the writer summarizes some of their deeds

Note: Some of these deeds will apply to people named, but some do not, yet the writer summarizes deeds of faith, even those he does not associate them with any particular person.

A. By faith they subdued kingdoms (v33)

Note: This applied to kings, judges, and prophets mentioned as well as some not mentioned.

- 1. Many times, the interest and power of kings and kingdoms conflict with God's plans
- 2. God can easily subdue all kings and kingdoms that set themselves to oppose him.
- 3. Faith is suitable and excellent qualification of those who fight for the Lord, for faith makes us just, bold, and wise

B. They "wrought righteousness."

- 1. These people of faith turned many from idols to the ways of righteousness
- 2. They believed God, and it was imputed to them for righteousness
- 3. They walked and acted righteously towards God and man.
- 4. Faith is an active principle of righteousness.

C. They "obtained promise."

- 1. Faith gives us the ability to obtain promises
- 2. Promises comfort us when we see them through faith
- 3. Faith enables us to wait on the promises
- 4. Faith causes us in due time to receive our promises.

D. They "stopped the mouth of lions."

1. The power of God is above the power of the creature.
2. Faith engages the power of God for his people
3. Faith is to be used for God's glory
4. Faith enables us to overcome brute beasts and brutish men.

E. They “quenched the violence of the fire.”

1. Moses by the prayer of faith, quenched the fire of God's wrath that was kindled against the people of Israel in Numbers 11:1-2
2. The three Hebrew children were kept safe through the fire in Daniel 3:17-27
 - a. Their faith in God enabled them to refuse to worship the golden image
 - b. Their faith in God exposed them to the fiery furnace which Nebuchadnezzar had prepared for them
 - c. Their faith in God brought to and for them the power and presence of God in the furnace
 - d. Their faith in God quenched the violence of the fire to such an extent that there was not so much as the smell of smoke upon them
 - e. God's grace was abundantly sufficient as they exercised their faith in God, even willing to die, if necessary, for they believed God had a better reward for them
3. May I add that God's grace is still sufficient for you and I as long as we move and operate in faith believing God will provide, even ready to die for our Lord

F. They “escaped the edge of the sword.”

- a. David escaped the sword of Goliath and of Saul
- b. Mordecai and the Jews escaped the sword of Haman.
- c. The swords of men that are against us are held in the hand of God
 - i. God can blunt the edge of the sword for His people
 - ii. God can turn the sword away from his people against their enemies when he pleases.
- d. Faith takes hold of the hand of God which has hold of the swords of men, and God allows Himself to be persuaded by the faith of his people.

G. “Out of weakness they were made strong.”

1. The Jews would become weak because of sin and unbelief, and from out of that weakness, revived faith caused them to be strong again.
2. Hezekiah was nigh unto death, but from out of his weakness he was made strong as he in faith cried out to the Lord for healing
3. Look at what Hezekiah said to God in Isaiah 38:15

What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

4. Let us understand that this same faith is what will raise us from our spiritual, physical, financial, and mental weakness to recovered and renewed strength as we patiently in faith wait upon the Lord.

H. They “grew valiant in fight.”

1. Joshua and David are good example of growing valiant (brave, heroic, fearless) in fight
2. True faith gives true courage and patience
3. True faith discerns the strength and ability of God while seeing the weakness of the enemy
4. God is a rewarder of diligent faith
5. True faith “puts to flight the armies of the aliens” can be spiritual as well as physical, because behind every physical battle is a spiritual battle to be overcome.

I. “Women received their dead raised to life again.”

1. The widow of Zarepath in 1st Kings 17:23
2. The Shunamite woman in 2nd Kings 4:36
3. Mary and Martha received Lazarus again
4. The world has received Christ raised again to give us new life
5. We all live with the expectation of a resurrection of the dead at the return of our Lord
6. Consider

- a. In Christ there is neither male nor female, so faith has no gender and in many cases, women have more faith than men. Why?
- b. We are people of faith, but we are still subject to death even though we have eternal life, but death has lost its sting for the power of God sets free from sin, thus we will be resurrected, change to a new life in a new body eternal in Christ
- c. Death is always painful, but faith looks beyond death to life
- d. God has raised people from the dead in this world, even since Christ, but all in Christ will be raised at the coming of the Lord
- e. God being able to raise the dead should confirm our faith in the resurrection.

III. The apostle tells us what these believers endured by faith.

A. They “were tortured, not accepting deliverance.”

- 1. They stayed faithful to God in persecution instead of denouncing God
- 2. They bore the torture not accepting deliverance because they had hope of obtaining a better resurrection

B. They endured “trials of cruel mocking and scourging.”

- 1. They were persecuted by being mocked
- 2. They were beaten and placed in prisons and made slaves
- 3. Sinners dislike God and those who serve God and some will do what they can to appease their conscience by persecuting God’s people.

C. They were put to death in the most cruel manner

- 1. Some were stoned like Zechariah in 2nd Chronicles 24:21
- 2. Some were sawn asunder like Isaiah by King Manasseh
- 3. Some were tempted
- 4. Some were burnt according to 2nd Maccabees 7:5 where 7 sons and their mother were tortured to death because they refused to eat the meat of swine and denounce God

D. Those who escaped death were persecuted so severely that death could have been easier

- 1. Their enemies only spared them to prolong their misery and wear out their patience

2. They forced to “wander about in sheepskins and goat-skins” (37-38)
 3. They were destitute, afflicted, and tormented (37-38)
 4. They wandered about in deserts, on mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth
 5. They were stripped of the conveniences of life
 6. They were turned out of house and home
 7. They were without proper clothing
 8. They had to hide where they could
 9. They endured these things through faith
- E. We who are under grace have a greater advantage than those under the law (39-40)
1. These all obtained a good report through faith (39)
 2. They did not receive the promise (39)
 3. God has provided better things for us (40)
 4. These great people of faith should not be made perfect without us (40).

IV. What they obtained by their faith.

- A. They obtained a great character and were commended by God
1. The world was not worthy of them
 2. The world did not value them, but God valued them
- B. They “obtained a good report.”
1. They are listed in God’s calendar of Old Testament men and women of faith
 2. To be honored by God is greater honor than the world has to offer
- C. They obtained an interest in the promises, though not the full possession of them.
1. They had a title to the promises even though they received not the great things promised.
 2. These men and women of faith went to Abraham’s bosom at death

3. They saw the promises of the Messiah, but never got to possess them, yet when Christ brought captivity forth to raise Paradise from below to on high, they became beneficiaries of the promises they proclaimed and looked for as well as yearned for

Note: This list of faith people in Hebrews 11 sets the stage for chapter 12 verses 1 and 2.