

"By Faith"

Hebrews 11:32-40

Part 7

A Faith That Endures to the End

I. THROUGH FAITH MANY OTHERS – VS. 32-40

In the previous point (vs. 23-31), we saw examples of **Faith That Finishes**. It spoke of those who began a journey with God and, by faith, followed Him through **to the end**.

As we come to the concluding section of this chapter, we see **faith that endures**. We will see that faith enduring through **personal trials, through suffering, obscurity, and even martyrdom**. These were believers who **did not see** the full promise in their lifetime, yet held fast in faith to the very end.

This passage marks the conclusion of the great "**Hall of Faith**" in the book of Hebrews. Throughout this chapter, we've seen the faith of some of the most recognizable saints in the Old Testament: Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua (and the nation of Israel), and Rahab. Their lives have served **as examples to encourage and strengthen our own walk of faith** with the Lord today.

In this final section, we will consider a few more truths about faith that I trust will continue to impact our lives long after this study is complete.

When I speak of **faithful people** in this passage, I don't mean those who never doubted or struggled. Rather, these are men and women whose trust, though imperfect, was **ultimately placed in God**, not in

themselves or their circumstances.

And by faithful, I also mean those who have believed in Christ for **eternal salvation**, as the final verses of the chapter affirm, not merely "spiritual" or "religious" people, as our culture might define them today.

A. God honors the faith of imperfect people – vs. 32-35a

➤ Even in some of the **darkest times** recorded in the Bible, God commends faith.

1. **Faith in a time of rebellion against God:** the judges: a time when *"every man did that which was right in his own eyes."*

a) Gideon (Judges 6 and 7) – required multiple signs to anchor his **hesitant faith**.

He was literally **hiding in a winepress** when "the angel of the LORD" called him a **"mighty man of valor."**

Judges 6:11-12

¹¹ And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abiezerite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide *it* from the Midianites. ¹² And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

Gideon's faith was shown to be quite like **ours today**, serving as a **powerful example** of someone who **struggled to believe** what God told him, and he asked for a sign to strengthen his face several times, yet he **ultimately obeyed** "through faith."

(1) The angel's sign with the offering – Judges 6:17-21

- (a) Gideon asks for a sign that the Angel of the Lord **is truly speaking** to him. He prepares an offering, and the Angel touches it with His staff. The fire consumes it, and the Angel vanishes.

This was done to confirm God's **presence** and **call**. It produced both fear and acknowledgement of God's presence.

(2) The first fleece test – Judges 6:36-38

- (a) He asks God to make the fleece of wool (not sure what this was: perhaps his sheepskin cloak with wool on it) wet with dew while the ground around it remains dry.
- (b) This was done to confirm **God's promise to save Israel** through him.

(3) The second fleece test (reverse) – Judges 6:39-40

- (a) Gideon asks again about the fleece, only this time to have the fleece dry and the ground wet.
 - (b) The purpose was **to remove any doubt in his mind**. He asks this in **humility**, recognizing his own **limited faith**.
- (4) Although he didn't ask for another sign, God gave him **one last support**: the enemy's dream confirmed – Judges 7:9-15.

- (a) He tells Gideon to go to the enemy camp and listen to what they were saying. He overhears a Midianite soldier tell a dream of a **tumbling loaf of barley bread** destroying the camp, which was interpreted (in vs. 14) as "the sword of Gideon the son of Joash."
 - (b) Gideon's faith was firmly established now, and his reaction to this was "worship" (vs. 15).
- b) Barak – **hesitant at first**, but followed through with obedient faith (Judges 4)
- (1) Some have termed Barak's faith as "**faith in motion**," moving from uncertainty toward obedience.
 - (2) When he said he wouldn't go to battle without Deborah (Judges 4:8), it's not to be viewed as cowardice. It's **an honest recognition** of his own **limitations** combined with a **willingness to obey** despite those limitations.
- Barak's faith teaches us that recognizing our need for **stronger faith** is itself a step of faith, but we must not wait until our faith feels strong to act in obedience. God honors **faith that acts**, even when it **feels weak**.
- c) Samson – his inclusion here speaks on the issue of **faith after failure** (Judges 13-16)
- (1) Samson's mention in Hebrews 11 shows us that God can **redeem a life** that is marred by failure when there is a **return to faith**.

- (2) Though Samson sinned greatly, he turned back to God in his final moments, and God answered him. His story shows us that **past failure does not disqualify a person from ever having faith again** or from God's recognition of that faith when repentance and trust are present.

Judges 16:28

²⁸ And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

- d) Jephthah – he is a picture of faith amidst a **flawed understanding or theology** (Judges 11)
- (1) Jephthah was the son of a prostitute, rejected by his family, and drawn into leadership in desperate times. Yet, in faith, **he trusted God** for victory over Israel's enemies and God delivered His people.
- (2) The most dramatic and well-known episode in Jephthah's life is his **misguided attempt** to secure God's favor with the vow to offer the first thing that came out of his house when he returned from victory.

This is one of the most difficult texts in the entire Bible and scholars have debated it for ages. The point is not to give details and an opinion on that at this point. Regardless of what happened with his daughter, his presence here shows us:

- (a) **God honors genuine faith**, even in the midst of theological or moral errors.

- (b) A sincere heart can still make very **unwise decisions**: "you can be sincere and be sincerely wrong."
- (c) God used Jephthah in spite of his **flawed background** and **limited understanding** (he didn't have all that we have today in a finished Scripture, the indwelling Holy Spirit, a fellowship of believers).

2. **Faith in time of rule**: the kingdom

- a) David – king of Israel – "a man after God's own heart."
- b) Samuel – priest, prophet, and judge – faithful from his childhood to his death.
- c) The prophets (considering the use of this phrase in the New Testament in general, this can be viewed as the time of the writing prophets) – these were fearless proclaimers of God's word, no matter the consequence.

➤ Faith is **not the absence of flaws** or being perfect; it's **the presence of trust and dependence**. God uses those who trust Him, not those who impress men.

B. **God honors the faith of unnamed sufferers – vs. 35b-38**

"Of whom the world was not worthy"

From the world's point of view, these faithful people appeared like those that **would be rejected**: some were homeless, persecuted, living in caves and holes in the ground. **They looked like complete failures** but the author of the book of

Hebrews shows something quite the opposite: it wasn't that these people were unworthy of the world, but **that the world was unworthy of them.**

This provided comfort and encouragement to the **original readers** who were themselves **facing persecution.** The author is essentially saying, "When the world rejects you for your faith, remember that you're in the company of people so faithful that the world itself was unworthy to contain them." This allows us to see suffering as **not something to fear** but something where we see **the presence of Almighty God** working through.

1. Some were tortured without accepting deliverance (vs. 35b) "that they might obtain a better resurrection."
 - a) From what many scholars aptly show, this is speaking of the time between Malachi and Matthew, a period of about 400 years. It is known as **the Maccabean Period** because of a leader of a rebellious faction a couple centuries before Christ.
 - b) There were martyrs during the time of persecution under **Antiochus Epiphanes** (175-164 BC), particularly those as described in 2 Maccabees 7-7 (an apocryphal book). These martyrs explicitly refused offers of deliverance from this persecution if they renounced their faith because **they believed in a "better resurrection."**

Philippians 3:10-11

¹⁰ That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; ¹¹ If by any means I might attain unto the

| resurrection of the dead.

2. Some were mocked and scourged (vs. 36a), showing they were rejected by the world.
3. Some were imprisoned, stoned, sawn asunder, etc. (vs. 36b-37) – speaks of martyrdom for their faith.
4. Some wandered destitute (vs. 38b)



God sees all those serving Him in obscurity, those that are afflicted, and even those that are forgotten, and **honors their steadfast faith**. The world, even the Christian world, honors success whereas **God honors faithfulness**.

C. God will ultimately honor the faith of all His saints eternally – vs. 39-40

1. Though they were commended for their faith, the Old Testament saints **did not receive the fullness** of the promise – vs. 39.
 - a) **“And these all”** – this goes back to verse 2, and the phrase “by it the elders...” The “all” is the “elders.” I made this point as we began studying this chapter: The primary focus is on the list between verses 2 and 39 but would also include all of the “elders” mentioned in the Bible that demonstrated their faith in God.
 - b) **“Having obtained a good report”** – as stated in that first study: The “good report” they obtained means **God Himself gave testimony** to their lives. It’s as if heaven wrote a report card on their faith (Hebrews 11) – and **God’s voice declared**, “This one believed Me. This one trusted Me.”

c) **"Through faith"** – question: **"Could it be said of us** that God has **written a good report** of us because of our faith?" If we learn who all these "elders" (saints) were and how God used very **imperfect people**, we have no real reason to not be able to live a life of faith that would merit **the same "good report."**

d) **"Received not the promise"**

(1) **Hebrews 9:15** speaks of the "promise of eternal inheritance," which helps clarify Hebrews 11:39, where the saints "received not the promise." The term **"inheritance"** would have **resonated deeply** with Jewish readers, but more than that, it refers to the **full enjoyment** of what God promised: **eternal life** secured through Christ. Though Old Testament believers were **saved by grace** through faith, they did not receive the complete fulfillment of that promise until after the redemptive work of Christ.

(2) This phrase does not mean the Old Testament saints were not saved or were somehow excluded from God's blessings. It means **they did not experience the fulfillment of the promised Messiah** and the new covenant in their lifetime. They **looked forward** in faith (vs. 13), but the fullness of that promise (the redemption accomplished in Christ and the eternal inheritance is secured) was something they **anticipated but did not see.**

2. God has provided **something better** for the New Testament saints – **"for us"** – vs. 40a

a) This is speaking of what we have seen so often throughout this study of Hebrews: the **New**

Covenant, the finished work of Christ.

b) That “**better thing**” that we now enjoy through Christ includes:

(1) The coming of Christ (**Heb. 1:2**)

(2) His once-for-all sacrifice (**Heb. 9:12**)

(3) Direct access to God’s presence (**Heb. 10:19-20**)

(4) The indwelling Holy Spirit (**Heb. 8:10-11; Ezek. 36:27**)

(5) Full knowledge of the gospel (**1 Pet. 1:10-12**)

c) The author is saying that the New Covenant is **the fulfillment** of what the Old Covenant **pointed toward**, and the **reality** that we now live in that they only **anticipated**.

3. “**They**” (the Old Testament saints) “**without us should not be made perfect**” (vs. 40b).



Faith looks ahead, not only to what God is **doing now**, but to what He has **prepared for eternity**. Our story today is connected to theirs, and the **fulfillment of the promise** (eternity in heaven) is yet to come.

a) “**Made perfect**” (τελειόω) in Hebrews means to **reach completion** or fulfillment, not moral perfection.

b) “**Without us**”

God had **something better** in store, not just for the saints of old, but for all of us together.

Though those who came before us **lived by faith** and were **approved by God**, they didn't receive the fullness of the promise in their lifetime. Why? Because God planned **something greater**: that we, along with them, would one day be made **complete together** in Christ. Their faith **looked forward**, ours **looks back**, but we are all part of the same story of redemption. And in the end, God will bring all His people – past and present – into the fullness of His promise, perfected together in Him.

Conclusion: When we began this study, we learned that **"faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."** We've now seen that truth demonstrated through several of God's saints across thousands of years, and we've discovered that God has been **writing a story about faith** that includes not just these ancient heroes, but **every person** who trusts in Him.

These heroes have shown us that God wants those with **genuine faith** that trusts **His character** and moves towards **His will**, regardless of background or history. The question is whether you will **join the ranks** of those who **live by faith rather than sight**, who choose **God's promises** over what the **world has to offer**, and who trust His **goodness** even when His ways are **unclear**. The same God who honored their faith is ready to honor yours.