

Heroic Faith **Hebrews 11:32-34**

Introduction

We near the end of our chapter and the great Hall of Faith.

These three verses cite some more heroes of the faith in brief (vv.32-24); and later the writer talks about the faith of believers in general (vv.35-40). We read about four judges who lived during a time of dark apostasy and deep rebellion by the people of God. Mention is made of a king (David) and a prophet (Samuel).

The writer of Hebrews has basically reminded us that the whole Old Testament is really a powerful picture of profiles of people who lived their lives in faith. The story of faith is the story of people who dared believe God; in spite of obstacles, in spite of culture, in spite of circumstances; **in spite of personal failings**. In every case faith triumphs and wins the victory. The writer will give us a glimpse of the faithful who accepted responsibility (sometimes reluctantly and sometimes imperfectly) to believe God; call upon God; and act with great courage (v.32). Once again heroic faith is rewarded (vv.33-34).

Some of faith's victories are public; some are private; some seem miraculous and others ordinary. Some were delivered by faith; others did not escape but rather were given grace—sufficient grace to bear hardship and suffering. What have we learned in the chapter? God works through faith and faith alone. Exercising faith is the only way to please God and invite God's blessing. Faith is a gift from God through the Word and through God's Holy Spirit. Faith isn't simply a feeling or a sentiment we conjure in ourselves through sheer will power. Faith is confidence in God; in God's Word and most certainly in God's Savior. Faith is always tested. Faith at times seems foolish—but always conquers in the end.

Brief Profiles In Courage (v.32)

Hebrews 11:32–34 (NKJV) ³²And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:

In 1957 a young Senator from Massachusetts wrote a short volume entitled Profiles in Courage. It would later earn the Pulitzer Prize. The book profiles senators who defied the opinions of their party and constituents to do what they felt was right and suffered severe criticism and losses in popularity because of their actions. It begins with a quote from Edmund Burke on the courage of the English Statesman, Charles James Fox, in his 1783 attack upon the tyranny of the East India Company in the House of Commons.

The Senator's name was John F. Kennedy. I read the book in elementary school. Edmund Burke wrote a letter to Charles James Fox dated October 8, 1777;

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“People crushed by law, have no hopes but from power. If laws are their enemies, they will be enemies to laws; and those who have much to hope and nothing to lose, will always be dangerous.”

We will give only brief attention to our heroes.

In the end the leaders by and large demonstrated a sense of humility in God’s calling for their life; they accepted tremendous responsibility; showed persistent courage; trusted and depended upon God and then conquered—against all odds—incredible odds—unbelievable odds.

When people make God and Christ and the Gospel enemies—we seek first to win them—to love them—but make no mistake—we will oppose and resist all those who oppose and resist God’s plan—God’s land—and God’s seed.

Gideon

The story of Gideon is found in the book of Judges. He was already a grown man when God first called Gideon to serve in the role of Judge and deliverer (Judges 8:20). He gained a reputation as a warrior and soldier by resisting and fighting against the terrorist attacks of Median (see Judges 6:12). The terror attacks became so brutal and frequent that people were in a state of hyper-vigilance. The people were forced to build protective walls and work inside those walls in order to accomplish the business of living (see Judges 6:11). But an angel of the Lord called Gideon to leadership and to serve to deliver the people of Israel from their enemies. Some of us know Gideon’s story. He felt unqualified; he was gripped with a profound sense of personal inadequacy and unworthiness. But the Lord offered Gideon assurance after assurance. What happened? Gideon finally believed the Lord and God gave Gideon a supernatural empowering by His Holy Spirit. Some of us remember Gideon tested God’s call by putting out the so called fleece (Judges 6:36-40). Once again the Lord assured Gideon that he was chosen—to fight God’s enemies and save God’s people. Gideon believed God and with three hundred hand picked men—Gideon confronted the enemy. “Arise, for the Lord hath delivered not your hand the host of Midian” (Judges 7:1).

What made Gideon an outstanding leader? Faith in his outstanding Lord. Before he launched his campaign against the Midianites, he cried out to these hand-picked warriors; “Arise, for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian” (Judges 7:15).

Barak

And who is Barak? His story is told in Judges 4-5. When the call came to save Israel, the Canaanites had been attacking and oppressing Israel for 20 years. The Canaanite army was led by a man named Sisero. Barak’s call to service came from the prophetess Deborah. Barak was already a soldier—but once again he hesitated—resisted—feeling inadequate—incapable—of such a huge task. Barak insisted that the prophetess Deborah go to battle by his side. When she

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agreed—Barak surrendered to the call of God for his life. Once again like Gideon Barak—faced unbelievable odds. Sisero the commander-in-chief of the Canaanites had over 900 chariots of iron (ancient tanks!) and a massive army. Barak believed God. He attacked with only 10,000 men and won an incredible victory. He did not act apart from God—or without God—but rather believed God—and because he believed God; God gave him the victory.

Think for a moment. What Barak believed about God. That God loved His people—and wanted to deliver God’s people from their enemy.

Sampson

We are most familiar with Sampson (Sunday School and Cinema). His story is found in Judges chapters 13-16. The children of Israel were oppressed by the Philistines (40 years). Sampson was raised a Nazarite! He killed a lion on his way to a wedding. He killed 30 Philistines to pay off a clothing debt. When Sampson lost his wife—he burned the wheat fields of the Philistines. He killed 1000 Philistines with the jaw bone of a donkey. He ripped off an iron gate at Gaza. He was betrayed into the hands of the Philistines by Delilah. He was shaven, blinded, and enslaved. He was supernaturally empowered to destroy more Philistines in their own temple by pulling it down. He himself died at that time.

We have only two recorded prayers of Sampson in the Bible (both are carnal and self-centered; see Judges 15:18; and 16:28). Sampson in the course of his life—violated (broke) all of his Nazarite vows; he touched the carcass of a lion (14:8-9); he drank wine (14:10); he allowed his hair to be cut (16:19). Sampson learned the high cost of low living!

How in the world does Sampson make the list? Clearly he was a man with serious flaws and serious weakness. He don’t see him repent of his carnal passions or even the breaking of his Nazarite vows. But the Bible pictures him as a man of faith—and courage. He single-handedly fights the Philistines and wins! He fights with strength and is given repeated victory.

Matthew Henry makes this astonishing statement; “True faith is acknowledged and accepted, even when mingled with many failings” (Vol.6; p.951).

Haven’t you ever asked the question; “How could God possibly use that person?”

Jephthah

Jephthah lived during the time of the Judges (chapter 10:6-12:17). He was the son of a harlot (polite term for a whore). He was taken from his mother and raised by his father. It would appear that he was taunted, abused, and rejected by his family and neighbors. He became a mighty warrior. In his day the oppressing nation was Ammon and the time of oppression lasted 18 years followed by 6 years of peace. On the eve of the battle with Ammon Jephthah made a foolish and rash vow to God; if victorious he would offer the first thing that greeted him. His

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daughter met him and he sadly performed his vow (but some controversy exists as to how exactly he fulfilled his vow and whether the sacrifice involved death or simply that his daughter was set aside and never allowed to marry. Later Jephthah is provoked into battle with the jealous tribe of Ephraim.

David

We could easily talk about David for days. David was chosen by God to be the King of Israel. He was chosen as a young shepherd boy tending the flock of his father (1 Sam.16:1). “The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16:13). In that chapter The Spirit comes upon David and departs from Saul. David was called “the shepherd of Israel”; singer; soldier; sorrowful; statesman sovereign. He is the man after God’s own heart and yet guilty of the most vile sin. He commits adultery with Bathsheba and arranges to have her husband killed. The prophet Nathan confronts David about this and the King confesses; God forgives David—but their are terrible—consequences. His infant son will die (2 Samuel 12:18); his daughter raped—by his son Ammon (13:14); Ammon will be murdered by his half-brother and David’s son Absalom; and his own son will seek to usurp his throne.

He will write Psalms; kill a giant; he will spent some of his life acting like a man of God; being true to the Word of God and rely on the promises of God and execute the judgment of God!

The Bible teaches that as a young boy he faced a lion, and a bear and a giant. He was feared and hated by Saul—because Saul rebelled and disobeyed and was disqualified from his high office. Saul pursued David for years trying to kill him. David proved to be a man of extraordinary trust in the wilderness and faced trial after trial defeating enemy after enemy. He stretched the borders of Israel and proved faithful for most of his life—except for the awful lapse of judgment with Bathsheba. David wrote 73 Psalms! Jesus is the Son of David.

Samuel

Brief Points Concerning Faith’s Rewards (vv.33-34)

33who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

Heroic Faith Subdues Kingdoms

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Heroic Faith Worked Righteousness

“...worked righteousness”

The working of righteousness is not simply the revelation of individual or personal virtues; heroic faith uses victory to further the cause of what is right—in this case the cause of Christ.

What is the point the writer of Hebrews is trying to make? When Gideon and Barak and Sampson and Jephthah believed God and obeyed God—they set examples of righteousness and taught righteousness. Believing and obeying God works righteousness in our lives. Carry that thought to the next step—as a result of living a life of faith—confidence—courage—it provoked others to live lives of faith—confidence—courage. People turn to the Lord and begin to live lives marked by righteousness.

Can the faith of a single person persuade others—stir others to believe God and live righteous lives?

Heroic Faith Obtains Promises

Heroic Faith Stops The Mouths Of Lions

34quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Heroic Faith Quenches The Violence Of Fire

Heroic Faith Escapes The Edge Of The Sword

Heroic Faith Brings Strength Out Of Weakness

Heroic Faith Grows Valiant In The Fight

“...became valiant in battle”

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Biblical faith, heroic faith, is never contained to a simple set of propositions or beliefs. Faith is acted out. Faith is not always noun—in our passage Faith is a verb—it acts.

Conclusion