

## Heb. 11:30-34

In our last two studies, we have been working through [Heb. 11](#), which has been rightly termed **the hall of faith**. For the Christian, faith is what started our journey with **Jesus**, and it's what has secured the reality that one day we will end up in eternity with God in the kingdom of Heaven.

- But the faith applied between those two points (our conversion and our leaving our current state to forever enter into His rest), will also determine the level of victory or defeat that will accompany our life while we are here on earth.
- And will determine how we navigate the parts of life we believe make sense to us, as well as those areas that we cannot make sense of. Because sometimes God's plans are not our own.
- And in our study today we will hear of how those who exercised faith in God, experienced outcomes they could not have anticipated without faith; **1**) some to great victories while on earth **2**) and others who through faith were given the strength to pass through various and significant trials, **even that of persecution unto death** (we'll get into that next time). So with that setup, let's jump in.

***<sup>30</sup> By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.***

Now the children of Israel, once they crossed the Jordan River and came into the promised land, prepared for their first battle, which was to be against **Jericho**, the largest and most fortified of the Canaanite cities (start big). And while Joshua went to scope the place out on his own, he sees a man standing opposite him with his sword drawn. *And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come."* (Josh. 5:13-14). Which is another one of those wonderful Christophanies (an appearing of Jesus pre-incarnate) brought up through this book.

- So, the Lord now gives the battle plan for Jericho, and it is unconventional to say the least. **Therefore requiring great faith from Joshua and his men** (who had not seen Jesus as Joshua had).
- Now let me ask, what would have happened if they tried their way instead because they didn't place their **faith** in Jesus' plan? We find out in the next chapter of **Joshua** (**Ch. 7**), where they suffered defeat in **Ai** (36 men of Israel died), in what was an insignificant town (the complete opposite of Jericho).
- But because of the faith of an entire nation who trusted in God's plan at Jericho, they witnessed God bring the victory, without a single loss on their side at all (can you imagine seeing faith like that in our nation?).

***<sup>31</sup> By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.***

**Rahab** was a harlot (yes- a prostitute) who lived in Jericho. And when Joshua had sent in two spies to check it out, she took and hid them from the king of Jericho who had found out they were there.

- And in talking with the spies, she told them *I know that the Lord has given you the land, ... For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt* (she had more faith here than many Christians today), *and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed* (Josh. 2:8-10). And then she declares, *For the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath* (Josh. 2:11).
- So she took what she had heard, and believed to be true, and placed her faith in the God of Israel. **And she was saved** (Gal. 3:5-6). Making her the first recorded gentile believer after the birth of the nation of Israel.
- And so, when the walls of Jericho fell on that 7<sup>th</sup> day, the section of the wall where her house was, was the only portion still standing.

Now if the account had stopped there, and she and her family inside her house with her were the only ones saved (and they were), that would be amazing enough. But that's not the end.

- Rahab would marry **Salmon** and together they would have a **son Boaz**, who is the one who would marry **Ruth** (another gentile who would put her faith in God), making her the **grandmother of David** and placing both her (Rahab, the now former prostitute) and Ruth **in the direct lineage of Jesus** (Matt. 1:5, Ruth. 4:20).
- Which shows how absolutely sincere God was when in **verse 16** He says, "I am *not ashamed to be called their God*" (did I mention that your faith in God has caused Him to rewrite your testimony [**verse 2**]).
- And there wasn't a person in that city God would not have saved if **1**) they would have simply taken the same information they all had about the work of God, **2**) that displayed the truth that He was God

(because although it requires faith, it is not blind faith (verses 1 & 3), **3**) and applied the same faith in God- but they didn't!

Now as we work through verses 32-38 we are going to see faith displayed by three groups, classified by the outcome of their faith in times of great trial (we will cover group 1 today).

- And I for one am so grateful for this section of Hebrews, for it clears up a lot of confusion about what the outcome of faith should and could look like.
- For some have made extra-biblical stances that have led to a lot of grief for and confusion for other believers.
- So we start with **Group 1** - which are those individuals who through faith were delivered and were used to deliver others.

*<sup>32</sup> And 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 (judges, kings, and prophets): <sup>33</sup> who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions (such as Daniel), <sup>34</sup> quenched 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* (the very thing the individuals listed here would do).

Now if you haven't dug into the Old Testament, you are really missing out. For the examples of those who have gone before us in faith are riveting and encouraging.

- Although they did not walk perfectly in faith, they have walked more steps of faith than most. And we have several examples given here for us to look at.

Gideon (Judges 6:11, 7:1-25).

During the period of the judges, the **Midianites** had the Israelites living in caves in fear. And we find Gideon threshing wheat in the winepress to hide from them and their hoards who would consume everything of the land. And there *The Angel of the Lord appeared to him* (another Christophany), *and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!"* (Jud. 6:12). Please notice who Gideon is, is not equal to what he was doing, but who God says he is. God was rewriting his testimony while he was still hiding.

- And Gideon has a natural reaction at first, replying, *"how can I save Israel..."* (6:15). And then talks the Lord into staying for a meal for confirmation. And once the Lord consumed the meal with fire, Gideon was convinced 😊.
- And so he was told to tear down his father's alter to Baal, cut down the pole assigned to the worship of Ashtoreth, and then sacrifice one of his father's bulls on the fire made from these items.
- And although he had moved forward in faith, we are told *"Because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night"* (6:27)

Now we might call that little faith, but we should ask ourselves what risk we have taken that equals this? *How many of us have been willing to do what God has told us to do with seemingly less substantial consequences?* After all, Gideon does realize he will have to give an account in the morning, but he is taking on what he can, one step at a time (and truth be told, that's how it often works- and in doing so, **confidence and boldness will be being built up in us in trusting the Lord**).

But his main assignment was to deliver the people from the Midianites. And although he has already been given the charge and assurance that God will do this through him, he again stops to get another sign from God (6:36).

- It's not a bad thing to do this, but it's not a mature thing either, since he already had such an amazing encounter with the Lord that supplied confirmation to this call.
- But again, we should be encouraged here for we see God rewards a fledgling and growing faith. **He doesn't expect us to be perfect, but in process. Just as we see with Gideon here.**
- But we do see that faith grow quickly as Gideon is tasked with facing the 135k Midianites. And after amassing a troop of 32k, God tells him its too many. And has him take it down to 300- that's **Faith!**

Has the Lord ever called you to a seemingly impossible task? Did you accept it in faith? Folks, some have acted in faith to receive Jesus and then never really exercised faith again. Don't let that be your story.

Barak (Jud. 4:6-24)

The 3<sup>rd</sup> time the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, God gave them over to the king of **Canaan**. And during that time **Deborah** was the Judge over Israel, and a prophetess.

- She called **Barak** and asked him why he did not respond to God calling him to gather 10,000 men and go defeat the Canaanites led by **Sisera** (who had ninety iron chariots). God promised to deliver them into his hands. *“And Barak said to her, ‘If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.’ So she said, ‘I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman’.* (Jud. 4:8-9).”
- And although he would lead the troops into battle and victory through the Lord, with Deborah by his side, when the battle was over, he would not be the one to kill Sisera. A lady by the name of **Jael** would find Sisera running from the defeat and **1)** offer him a place to hide inside her tent. She then **2)** hid him under a blanket, **3)** gave him some warm milk to drink (when he asked for water, to make him sleepy), **4)** and then she drove a tent spike through his head. **The Lord gave Sisera into the hand of a woman.**
- And when you come to the next chapter (5) we hear the song the Israelites sang of the battle. And although Barak gets an honorable mention, the people are praising Deborah and Jael as the true heroes.
- So you would think these ladies (like Sarah and Rahab) would be mentioned here instead of Barak. But he did go, maybe displaying for us here that we don’t have to be the star of the show to get a reward for the faith we exercise- we just have to be a participant.

Men, I must say for a long time it has been trending that ladies have had an earlier connection with God and tend to be wired to be more intimate. And I’ve seen a lot of men submit the spiritual headship to their wives because of this. In faith, receive your calling today and be the one in the front, driving the charge in following the Lord (Eph. 5:22-23, Col. 3:18-19, 1 Pet. 3:1-7, 1 Cor. 11:3). **1)** Get everyone up and to church, **2)** listen to the concerns and opportunities in your family and be the one who says, “what does the bible say and what will honor the Lord”. **3)** Be the one who prays at the meals **4)** and leads the family in getting alone to be with God. **God did not call you to what you cannot do. Be the initiator of moves of faith in your family.** And moms, if dad won’t do it without you, then be there right beside him helping everyone to press into Jesus. And if he won’t move at all, then you do it in faith that one day he will awake to the call.

### Samson (Jud. 13:24-16:31)

And we are likely all familiar with the carelessness and indiscretions of Samson, yet how God used him anyway to deliver the nation from the **Philistines**.

- And it wasn’t until after Sampson had been captured, blinded, and bound (Jud. 16:21), that he called out to the Lord, and received his strength one more time, in order to push over the two pillars which held up the temple of the Philistines, killing more Philistines there than in all the rest of his life.
- And of all his sorted segments of life marked by rebellion, **by just one dynamic act of faith, God choses to mention of him here.**
- This might display the only way to finish victoriously after a wasted life. And I want to encourage those of you who might have that track record even to this day. **You can still finish in faith.** But I want a life filled with *faith*, not just a parting act of one. Who knows, maybe you have more life ahead than you can imagine. And this first move of genuine faith will change you forever.

### Jephthah (Jud. 11:1-29; 12:1-7)

Jephthah was called to deliver the Israelites from the people of **Ammon**. And through dialog with the Ammonites, he shows incredible courage as he recounts what God had done in bringing them into the land.

- But then he makes this foolish pledge with the Lord that if the Lord would deliver Ammon into his hand (something God already promised He would do), that Jephthah would give to the Lord the first thing that came out of his house when he returned home. Which we come to find out wasn’t a lamb, donkey, dog... but his only child, a daughter singing her daddies praises.
- And again, the text tells us before he made this pledge, the Spirit of the Lord had already come upon him for the victory. That vow, unsolicited by the Lord, was made because of **a lack of faith.**
- And **after these 3** (Barak, Sampon, Jephthah) find their names specifically mentioned by God here, **we find nothing of their short comings as recorded in the OT.** When it comes to Gods accounting, He remembers our faith, not our failures. And that should cause every one of us so much relief and encouragement.

### David & Samuel

And the accounts of how God used **David** and **Samuel** are so numerous and marvelous that anyone who has ever been in Sunday school has heard many of the stories pertaining to them. Now Samuels record is pretty

clean, but with David, mixed in with great moments of faith are also some pretty colossal blunders. Yet once again there is no mention of these here. Only the acts of *faith* are recorded.

## Prophets

Now, if you are one of the wise among us and have decided to be a student of the entire bible, including the OT, you can draw numerous accounts of the miracles of deliverance of kingdoms and individuals. **But I must admit that the faith of *the prophets* really stirs my desire to go deeper with God.**

- **Elijah** and **Elisha** being the two that frequently stand out to me. Yet we also know of **Daniel** being delivered from the lions, his **3 companions** being delivered from the fiery furnace, **Moses** being used to divide the Red Sea, and **Isaiah** calling the sun to move back 10 degrees as a sign to Hezekiah that God would heal him (2 Kings 20:11). And so much more.
- So we certainly see the things spoken of in **verses 33-35**. But there is also something else taking place here when *the prophets* are brought into the picture. For there is likely no group of people spoken of in the bible who have been more heavily persecuted than the prophets and the apostles. So much so, that Paul, when speaking to the nation, says to them in **Acts 7:52** *Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One...* This persecution came from within. And each prophet saw this pattern in the previous generations.
- **So although they had power to deliver, God chose to allow many of them to suffer greatly.** Can you imagine how much *faith* it would have taken to willingly fulfill that role? **First** of all, you would never want to make the mistake of misrepresenting or misspeaking for God. **2)** And you would delight when the people received the word and were delivered by God. **3)** But once you knew what you were to say, you would also have been aware there were some who would display hostility to you for speaking the truth. **That takes real *faith*.**

With the risk of sounding harsh, would you exercise that kind of faith and keep it when you saw it delivering others from trials **while at the same time delivering trials to you**? When was the last time you can recall just stepping out in faith? Has it been so long that your faith almost requires an obituary and a tombstone?

- Have you believed what once happened by the power of the Holy Spirit is now impossible? **As though God has somehow lost His ability to speak, direct, heal, deliver, and even carry us home through persecution, in perfect peace?**
- Folks, without faith not only is it impossible to please God, **it's also impossible to submit to God.** And without submitting to the perfect will of God, **it's impossible to live in a state of His perfect peace, while existing in a fallen world.** Which leaves all who choose this route in fear, anxiety, and overwhelming despair. **THAT IS NOT WHO GOD HAS MADE US TO BE** (2 Tim. 1:7, Rom. 8:15, Heb. 2:14-15, Rev. 12:11)!
- Is it time to open your ears, awaken your faith, and boldly move forward with the plan of God until He takes you home? You don't have to be a giant in the faith, but there is nothing stopping you from doing so. You don't have to be perfect, but you do have to keep growing. And each step of faith will cause a chain reaction for the next. Are you ready for that? God is!