

A Superior Principle Faith – Part 3

Hebrews 11:30-40

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One of the reasons I talked about going back to Hebrews 11:23 was we had to hurry over that section on Moses, but I want you to turn back there with me again. I want to outline the book as we wrap up this chapter. In verses 23-31 we see after the patriarchs. We looked at Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph; then, after the patriarchs, we looked at Moses. Moses is dealt with in verses 23-29, so it'll take us right up to our text. Go back with me to verse 23, after the patriarchs. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper,"—or godly or beautiful—"child; and they were not afraid"—notice that —"of the king's commandment. 24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect,"—or he looked away from—"unto the recompence of the reward."

Notice, verse 23, "By faith," and we did spend time on that last week, it was the faith of Moses' parents. His mother's name was Jochebed. When Moses was born, they knew by looking at this baby that there was something special about him, so they hid him for three months. We talked about the story of him being in the little basket, the princess finding him and going into the palace. But when he came to 40 years old, he made a choice, verse 24, "...when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," so by faith, "...he refused," and in verse 25, he chose, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." So, at 40 years of age, Moses made a choice to identify with the people of God rather, "...than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." We have to make the same choice. We have to choose that I'm going to follow Christ, I'm going to identify with Him, I'm not going to care what the world thinks of me or how they treat me, I'm going to follow Him.

Verse 27, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible," that's how he lived—by the eyes of faith. Verse 28, "Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. 29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying,"—trying—"to do were drowned." This whole section, verses 23-29, is dealing with the decisions that Moses made. He decided to reject position, pleasures, the promise of riches in Egypt, and he followed Jesus. Jesus said it like this, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." That's what it means to be a disciple—you die to yourself, you've been bought by a price, you belong to Jesus Christ, and you're following Jesus Christ. You want to leave the world, forsake and not love the world, but you want to be following Jesus Christ by faith.

Now we come to our text. Beginning in verse 30 we have the second after the patriarchs,

Joshua; and the third after the patriarchs is Rahab, verse 31. The second person that is dealt with after the patriarchs is Joshua, verse 30, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. 31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." The first is Joshua, and the story is recorded in Joshua 6:1-20. We get these Old Testament examples. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, led by Moses, they passed through the Red Sea and were forty years in the wilderness. Moses was not allowed to take them into the Promised Land, but Joshua was. The symbolism there is that the law can't lead you into the abundant life, which is Moses, but Joshua, our Jesus, can. Joshua represented Christ taking them into the Promised Land.

The story goes that when they first came into the land crossing the Jordan, the first thing they had to conquer was the city of Jericho, and it was a very fortified stronghold. They had these huge walls around it and would make it quite difficult for them to conquer. They could've been apprehensive and somewhat filled with fear, but we're going to see that they conquered by obeying and believing God and walking in faith and the walls came tumbling down, so "...the walls of Jericho fell down." Again, I believe that was an historical narrative, that it's a true story, not myth or make believe. There really was a Joshua; they really did go into the land of Promise; they really did conquer the city of Jericho, and the walls came tumbling down, "...after they were compassed about seven days."

This is a picture of faith's reward and the victory that we can have in Christ conquering obstacles like our Jericho's that we face. The story, and I can't go into all the details, was that they were going to take the city of Jericho and sought the Lord for the direction of how they were going to conquer it. The Lord told Joshua, "I want you to get the soldiers and seven priests, get the ark of the covenant, and have the seven priests have trumpets. For seven days, I want you to march around the walls with the people and the army and the priests. Don't say anything, don't do anything, just march around the walls once every morning, and on the seventh day, march around seven times. After the seventh time you've marched around, the priests will blow the trumpets, you give a big shout," and the walls came tumbling down.

Can you imagine Joshua's soldiers when they said, "Okay, Joshua, what's the plan? What's the battle strategy? Are you going to catapult us into the city and we're going to go in and slice heads off and conquer them? Are we going to do a battering ram and knock the wall down and storm the city? How are we going to take it, Joshua?" Joshua said, "No, we're just going to have a little walk around the city." "Oh, okay. That doesn't sound too bad. Then what do we do?" "Well, we just walk around again, then we walk around again for seven days." "You want us to walk around the city for seven days and do nothing. Okay. What about on the seventh day, then what do we do?" "Then, after we've walked around seven times, the priests are going to blow the trumpets, we're all going to give a shout, the walls are going to come tumbling down, and we're going to take over the city." I'm sure they thought, Is there anyone else in charge? Is there anyone else with a battle plan? What seemed so ludicrous and so insane was what God was testing them to trust and obey Him.

Many times we face obstacles like our Jerichos—fortified walls that cannot be conquered—yet

when we trust and obey God and do what God has told us to do, God can bring victory, right?, and the walls can come tumbling down. Just as God had instructed them in Joshua 6, they took the city of Jericho and the walls came tumbling down. In 2 Corinthians 10:4 it says, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." I love that. You might be facing a fortified Jericho right now, you might be looking at it in your own resources and in your own strength thinking, How can we bring down these walls? How are we going to get through this obstacle? Well, faith is the victory that overcomes the world, so we need to trust Him and live by faith even as Joshua took the step of faith and they brought down the walls of Jericho by faith.

The second is tied into it, verse 31, "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." Before they took the city of Jericho, recorded in Joshua 2, they sent spies into the city. The spies went to the home of a prostitute—yes, you heard me right a harlot. Some try to explain that away and say, "No, she wasn't a harlot, she just had an inn and was an innkeeper." It was a house of ill repute. They knew that they could be covered there. They knew they wouldn't be found there, so they went to Rahab's house. Rahab hid the spies on the roof. I don't have time to go into all the details, but they went looking for these men. Somebody saw the men come into the city (no big deal that men go to the harlot's house), and they went to knock on Rahab's door.

It's kind of fascinating that Rahab is held here as a woman of faith. She was a Gentile. She is the second of only two women in the chapter, the first was Sarah. There's quite a contrast between the two. Rahab hid the men and lied to those looking for the men, which is interesting that she lied and said, "They went that-a-way and told them to head for the hills, the gates were open and they could find them," and then uncovered the spies and said, "We know that you are going to take over our city. We've read and we've heard about all the victories that God has brought upon the nations around us and that you are going to conquer us," so she had a courageous faith to hide them. She knew that God was in control. She believed in the God of Israel, and she was confident that she would be saved if she trusted in the Lord. She was a sinful woman. Someone said that God took Rahab from the house of shame to the hall of fame. I love that. It's amazing to see in this list someone like this—a prostitute who was a Gentile yet is in the hall of faith, how God saves even those that we deem to be so unredeemable.

Rahab was also concerned about her family, so she struck up a covenant deal with the spies. She said, "Look, we know that God's with you, we know that you're going to take our city, so I want you to promise me that when you come back in to destroy our city that you'll spare me and my family. I'm going to have all my family in my house, that you'll spare and save our lives." They agreed and made a covenant with Rahab. Her house was on the wall of the city, so she let them down the side of her wall with a rope that was actually described as a scarlet or red rope. They said, "Okay, when we come to take the city, put this rope out the window, and it's going to be the sign that we don't kill or destroy you, and everyone that's in your house will be saved. If they're not in the house, then we are not bound by this covenant." The rope that was strung out the window actually is a picture or a type of the cross of Jesus Christ and the safety

that we have in Christ and that we're not destroyed because of our sin because we're hiding in Christ. It's the scarlet red rope of redemption.

It's interesting that later on in the Scriptures we find that Rahab was the mother of Boaz. Boaz married Ruth, we read about in the book of Ruth, and he also became the great-grandfather of David. He's mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:5-6. It's interesting that in the genealogical record of Jesus Christ that you have Rahab the harlot mentioned, a Gentile, and she's in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. She's also mentioned in the New Testament book of James 2:25 and held up as an example of faith that is genuine because it produced works. She had real, genuine saving faith that motivated her to hide the spies, to send the soldiers off a different direction, to make a covenant with them that they would not destroy her and her family, that she would put the scarlet rope out the window and would be spared. How God used that woman to bring about even the coming of Messiah—that she was in the very lineage of the Messiah—is just an amazing example of the grace of God. Amen? “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and...the weak things...to confound the things which are mighty.” We have the story of the sinners converted, verse 31, and we have the story of obstacles overcome or strongholds collapsing.

Now, we come to a new section, verses 32-40 the end of the chapter, where he's basically saying, “I want to summarize everything I've covered. I want to wrap this all up. Of all my teaching on faith, I'm going to summarize it now.” From verses 32-40 he kind of rapid-fire just gives us a summary of various Old Testament saints. He says, verse 32, “And what shall I more say?” Basically, he's saying, “I've proven my point. I presented my thesis, and now I just want to wrap it up.” Basically, he said everything he can say about the need to live by faith.

Keep in mind that these believers that were the original recipients of this letter were discouraged. They were being persecuted. They wanted to give up. They wanted to go back. They wanted to quit, so he's trying to encourage them not only to live by faith, but that faith is the victory that overcomes the world. He ends by saying that even though we walk and live by faith, it doesn't mean that we won't be persecuted, we won't suffer, we won't face difficulties; but like Abraham, he mentions earlier, we look for a city whose maker and builder is God, and we keep walking with our eyes on Jesus.

The first thing he does, and I wanted to point this out, is gives us their names rapid-fire, verse 32. He says, “...for the time would fail me to tell,”—in other words, I can go on and on and on and keep going through the Old Testament telling you story after story after story after story, but let me just give you some names to think about. He mentions six names, “...Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets,” he names them, he doesn't explain what about them is the aspect of their faith.

We know the story of Gideon, found in the book of Judges 7, where Gideon was actually told to go against the Midianites. Remember he was threshing wheat in the winepress because he was afraid of the Midianites. They were conquering the people of Israel. He was down in this ditch-kind-of-gully where you had the winepress. Normally you would get up on the hilltop

because the wind was needed to winnow or separate the wheat from the chaff. He was threshing with the threshing fork, and God comes to him and says, "Gideon, thou mighty man of valor, I've called you to go and free my people from the tyranny of the Midianites." Gideon is probably thinking, "You sure you got the right man? I'm down here in this hole trying to winnow this grain because I'm afraid that the Midianites are going to get me, and you call me, 'Mighty man of valor'?" Again, "But God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." We wouldn't have chosen Gideon. God chose Gideon because God wants the glory. God will not share His glory with another.

Many times God uses individuals that will bring Him greater glory, "...weak things...base things...things which are despised," Paul says, "...and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence." You can read the story of Gideon in the book of Judges 7, a marvelous story.

Gideon is told to put an army together, we love this story. He rounds up thirty-two thousand men. With thirty-two thousand men, they're outnumbered ten to 1. Can you imagine that? You're going to go to battle, outnumbered 10 to 1, and God says, "Gideon, you have too many men." It's like, "Uhhhh, excuse me, Lord? Run that by me again? I'm outnumbered 10 to 1, and you say I've got too many men?" "You've got too many men. You've got too many men. I want you to tell all these soldiers if they're fearful or afraid, go home." So he says, "Anybody afraid or anybody fearful, go home." When he made that announcement, twenty-two thousand men went home. Now it's time to freak out. You talk about insane. Then, God says to Gideon, "Well, you still have too many men, so I want you to take them down to the river and tell them to get a drink. The men that put their face into the water, send home, and the ones that looked around as they drank with their hand, carefully watching, those are the men I want you to take to battle." There were nine thousand seven hundred men that put their face in the water and drank like a dog, and he was instructed to send them home. Gideon's army now is three hundred. He's going out against thousands of Midianites with three hundred men.

Gideon was told to get pitchers and put a torch inside the pitcher and to actually get a sword and go out and yell, "The sword of the Lord and Gideon," break the pitchers, and that he would run into battle. God gave him victory as he put the fear of them in the hearts of the Midianites; so with three hundred men, he destroyed an army of thousands against the Midianites. The lesson is that God, again, wants the glory. When we trust in Him, rely on Him, look to Him, we hope in Him, God gets all the glory. Amen? So, we need to trust in Him and walk by faith—Gideon.

We won't spend time like that on every one of them, these six names in verse 32 were actually from the Judges and the prophets and the kings. Barak was a judge. By the way, this time period runs from the judges to the kingdom era, and then you had Samson. We know the story of Samson—the man who could've been, the man that should've been, but a man that wasn't. Then, we have Jephthae, which also was one of the judges. We have King David, and then we have Samuel, which is one of my favorite Bible characters, the prophet Samuel. Remember Hannah who was barren and prayed for a son. God gave her a little boy named Samuel, and

she dedicated him to the Lord. God used Samuel to turn the nation back to God. He was a great man of faith. Verse 32, "...and of the prophets," and Samuel was also considered a prophet, so that's their names.

Now we have their faith described in verses 33-34, "Who through faith." Now, the description of their faith and what it accomplished is no doubt tied into verse 32, "Gedeon...Barak...Samson...Jephthae...David...Samuel, and the prophets." Again, "Who through faith," this is what living by faith can accomplish. They did these things, "...subdued kindgoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword,"—and here's my favorite—"out of weakness were made strong,"—we all need that—"waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." When you read that, you want to just start clapping, "Wow! That's awesome! These guys are amazing!" These are the things that they accomplished by faith.

It would be easy to say, "What good is faith?" Well, listen to what the writer of Hebrews says, "...subdued kingdoms," again, it probably takes us back to verse 32 and probably refers to Samson conquering the Philistines and David conquering the Philistines and the enemies, and then says, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms,"—and the judges as well—"wrought righteousness,"—which could be a reference to Samuel, who turned the nation back to God. Again, think about Hannah, barren, praying for a baby. She was so earnest she said, "Lord, if You give me a son, I'll give him to You." God said, "That's exactly what I want. You'll have a son." He actually allowed her to be barren so that she would be broken and say, "I'll give my son back to You." God had his man, she raised him in the things of the Lord, and then she dedicated him to God in the temple, and he brought the nation back to God. When Samuel was old and retiring, leaving his ministry, he actually stood before the whole nation and said, "I've never stolen anything, I've never taken anything that wasn't mine," and he actually called God as his witness that he lived a life of integrity his whole ministry through. What an amazing man!

Verse 33, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,"—may God give us a nation more men and women like Samuel the prophet—"obtained promises,"—which could be a reference to David or to Joshua. God gave David a promise that the Messiah would come through him, and Joshua, that he would conquer the land of Promise. Then—we love it—"...stopped the mouths of lions."

Some commentaries I read said this could be David or Samson because David and Samson killed lions, but I think, and so do some other scholars, that the lion reference there, though he's not mentioned in verse 32, is a reference to Daniel. Isn't it interesting that Daniel isn't referenced in Hebrews 11? Again, this is why he said, "And what shall I more say?" There's so many it would just go on and on and on, but I love the story of Daniel in the lions' den, Daniel 6. When King Darius was fooled by his wise men not to let anyone pray to anyone but him, and Daniel, as his custom was, three times a day went into his room, opened his windows toward Jerusalem, and prayed and sought the Lord, they accused him of breaking the king's law. The king tried day and night to get him released from that command. He couldn't change the law of the Medes and the Persians, and Daniel is thrown into the lions' den—true story, historically

true, found here in the book of Hebrews to back it up, Daniel in the lions' den.

Think about that. Can you imagine being thrown into a den of hungry lions? The next morning the king ran quickly to the pit and said, "O Daniel...is thy God, whom thou servest...able to deliver thee from the lions?" Daniel said, "O king, live for ever," he yelled back to the king. Daniel probably had a better night's sleep than the king did in the lions' den. The king, in his palace, paced the floor all night worrying about Daniel. Daniel had a big lion for a pillow, and he went to sleep that night. I just imagine that there were angels that had those lions in a headlock. Think about how marvelous God's power is to protect us. Daniel trusted in the Lord. He wouldn't compromise. He wouldn't quit. He wouldn't give up.

These listeners to the book of Hebrews, the original recipients, were discouraged. They wanted to give up and quit, and all these are lessons to say, "Well, look at Daniel. He prayed and served the Lord and lived by faith. He even got thrown into the lions' den and God protected and kept him safe, even in the time of spending the night with the lions." How marvelous!

Some critics say, "Well, it's obvious the lions weren't hungry." Isn't it interesting that the story goes on that the king took those who tricked him into throwing Daniel into the lions' den, had them thrown in the den of lions, and they immediately devoured them, right? They were obviously hungry lions, but God delivered Daniel by faith in the lions' den.

Then, described further in verse 34, it says, "Quenched the violence of fire," again, my mind goes to Daniel 3 where Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the three young teenage Hebrews, taken from the land of Israel as captives to Babylon, young men away from home—mom and dad, family, their homeland—in this wicked, perverted land of Babylon. You think the United States is bad right now? It's bad, and we're pretty close to the Babylon of that time, but the king erected this huge image of himself and commanded everyone to bow down and worship this golden image. They struck up the band's music, and he said, "When the music begins to play, everyone is to hit the ground and worship me as this golden image." When the band began to play, everyone bowed except three young teenage Hebrew boys. I've always loved that image of this sea of people on their face and way out in the distance the king could see three individuals standing tall. They wouldn't bend, they wouldn't bow, and they wouldn't burn.

The king gave them another chance. He warned them, "If you don't bow down and worship this image, you're going to get thrown into the furnace." They said, "O King, we want you to know, for the record, we will not bow down, we will not bend, we will not worship your golden image; and if you throw us into the furnace, '...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us...But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image,'" That is awesome! That's the same kind of stance that we need in our culture today—we will not bow down, we will not bend, we will not worship your golden image. Even if we lose our jobs, even if we're persecuted or put to death or thrown into a fiery furnace, "...be it known...that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

The king, full of fury, had the furnace heated up seven times hotter than normal. It was so hot

that the soldiers who threw them in the furnace were fried. They threw the three Hebrews in and the only thing that burned was the ropes that bound them, right? The ropes popped off, and they were walking around in this fiery furnace. The king goes up and says, "Hey! How many people did we throw into that furnace?" His consultants said, "Well, we put three." He said, "I see four! And the fourth looks like the Son of God." What a marvelous experience! When they were in the fire, they met Jesus. Amen?

The minute they were released of their ropes, if I were Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego, I would've went SHEW! running out, but they're with the Lord in the fire experiencing His presence. You know, there's a picture there of how when we go through the fire, when we go through the furnace, when we go through the difficulties of life, it's there that Christ is with us and meets us in the fire.

John Bunyan, who wrote the spiritual allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*, from prison I might add, in Bedford, England, said, "In times of affliction we commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God." There was Jesus, I think that this was a Christophany—Christ appearing—in the book of Daniel in the fiery furnace, walking with them. The king had to actually ask them, "Come out, I want to talk to you guys." They came out, and the Bible says they didn't even smell like fire. They passed through the fire, and God preserved them. What a blessed thing that is! So they went through the fire.

Verse 34, "Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword,"—a lot of different examples of that in the Bible, David, Elijah, and other prophets. It says, "...out of weakness were made strong," if they're tied into verse 32, what a great picture that is of Samson. Samson gave away his secret, his hair was cut, and he became as weak as other men, right? But he turned back to the Lord, God gave him his strength and made him strong, "...out of weakness were made strong," us, too. Our weakness can be our greatest asset if it drives us to Christ, drives us to our knees, and drives us to dependence upon God. "...waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens," you can look at Barak who is mentioned in verse 32, Samson and some of the judges as well.

I like the story of Jonathan and his armour bearer when they both went together and destroyed a garrison of the Philistines, just the two of them. Jonathan turns to his armour bearer one night when they were lying in the camp of Israel and said, "Why are we just sitting here? Why don't we just go over, the two of us, and wipe out the Philistines? God can save by many or by few. If God is with us and God's in this, He doesn't even need the whole army, just you and me." If I were the armour bearer I would've said, "Just go back to sleep, Jonathan. You're dreaming." They devised a little plan by which they'd know it was God's will. They end up knowing it's confirmed. They run down into the Philistines and they rile the whole army of the Philistines—two individuals—because they were men who trusted in God and believed by faith. What a marvelous truth that is! They, "...turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

The names are in verse 32, their faith is in verses 33-34, and their endurance is described in verses 35-38. It says, "Women received their dead raised to life again,"—and notice this word, I

want you to make a note of it—"And others,"—it'll appear again in verse 36—"...and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 And others,"—there it is again—"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:)"—I love that—"they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Verses 35-38 describes their endurance.

Go back to verse 35. It says, "Women received their dead raised to life again." This could be a reference to Elijah in 1 Kings 17 who was with the widow at Zarephath. Her son died. He took him up to the upper room in the loft, laid upon him, prayed to God, and God heals him from the dead. It also tells us in 2 Kings 4 that Elisha had the Shunemite's widow's son, and he was raised to life as well. God raised people from the dead. When they came back to life from the dead, they came back in mortal bodies—they had to die again. This wasn't a resurrection, this was a restoration from death to life.

"Women received their dead raised to life again: and others,"—this is where he starts talking about their endurance. This is the portion of Hebrews 11 that is one of my favorite, but it's interesting, it's the one portion that's neglected. You've got this great chapter of faith, and everybody wants to talk about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all the great things of faith that they conquered, and we like to focus on faith and the victories and what it can bring about, but faith does not always deliver us from suffering, sorrow, trials, persecution, and death. You can be just as much a man or woman of faith and be persecuted, be put in prison, suffer, get sick, and die; so don't be deceived by those who teach that if you have enough faith, you'll be wealthy, healthy, and prosperous, that you're a King's kid and God wants you to drive a really expensive car, have all the fancy things of this world, and you'll be a president of a bank and prosper. Even as a Christian in this world—which is not our home, it's not worthy of us—we will suffer even though we're men and women of faith.

The "others," as I pointed out in verses 35 and 36, "And others had trial of cruel mockings." Go back with me to verse 35. They, "...were tortured." The word "tortured" actually in the Greek means they were beaten to death. It's tied into the word used for beating drums, and they would sometimes put them on a rack and take a stick and literally just beat an individual to death. They, "...were tortured, not accepting deliverance,"—they didn't recant, they kept the faith—"that they might obtain a better resurrection,"—they had their eyes focused on the eternal, not the temporal.

Verse 36, "And others,"—again, make a note, these "others"—"had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings," and so forth, they're just as much men and women of faith as those who escaped the sword, escaped the fire, and weren't eaten by the lions. "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." I think about how Jeremiah was thrown into a pit. Jeremiah was one of the most faithful, godly prophets of the Bible, but you know, he preached his whole ministry and life and never saw a convert? No one ever believed him, but he kept going. He wanted to be faithful. When he preached, he was

rejected and thrown into a pit. In 2 Chronicles 16, a man by the name of Hananiah rebukes Asa, the king of Judah, and he's beaten and thrown into prison, but he was just as much a man of faith.

Notice, verse 37, "They were stoned." Zachariah, the priest, 2 Chronicles 24, was stoned to death. "...they were sawn asunder,"—how's that for a life of faith. Tradition says that King Manasseh killed the prophet Isaiah by sawing him in two with a wooden saw. I don't know if that's the reference here or not, but it's tradition, "...they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword." I want you to notice that, "...were slain with the sword." Look back at verse 34, "Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword." In verse 34, faith brought them deliverance from the sword; but in verse 37, they did not escape the edge of the sword, they were slain with the sword.

Again, verse 37, "...being destitute, afflicted, tormented." I don't want to get sidetracked, and I've already mentioned it the last week or two, those who teach what's commonly called the Word of Faith, positive confession doctrine, they skip these verses. This is a chapter on faith. These are men and women of faith, and yet they, "...were slain with the sword...They were stoned, they were sawn asunder...imprisoned," they were beaten. Don't ever get the idea that faith will immune you from the sorrows and the suffering and the hardships of life. It will strengthen you to experience God's peace and God's power and God's purpose in your life and in your problems, but they don't always immune or deliver you from them. Many times God delivers us in and through them. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to go back to them, went into the fire—God saved them through the fire. Daniel went into the lions' den—God saved him—but not always.

In the book of Acts there's a martyrdom of the apostle James, and in just the next chapter of the book of Acts, Peter is released by an angel from prison. You have James beheaded, Peter released. Some say, "Well, they prayed for Peter; they didn't pray for James," which is nonsense. We can pray and God may not heal. We can pray and God may allow us to suffer and die. You say, "Well, then, why be a Christian?" Because you can gain the world but lose your soul, it profits you nothing. Jesus said, "Don't be afraid of him who can kill the body and after that there's nothing more he can do. I'll tell you who to fear, fear God who can take both your body and your soul and cast them into hell for all eternity." You know, when you fear the Lord, guess what? You don't have to fear anything else. If you fear the Lord, you don't have to fear man or what man can do to you. You don't have to fear what can happen to you, you can trust the Lord. Faith does not deliver us from the sufferings of this world.

I love it, it says, "...they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Again, to my knowledge, the Word of Faith teachers don't preach from that verse. It runs counter to their teaching, so it's unbiblical.

Notice the parenthesis in verse 38, "(Of whom the world was not worthy),"—I love that. The same is true today. You take a stand in our culture for Jesus, you take a stand for truth, you take a stand for righteousness, you're mocked, you're attacked, you're ridiculed, you're put

down, you're ostracized or rejected, yet they don't realize the value of these saints,—the salt of the earth, the light of the world—and the world is not worthy of them. It's interesting that when some Hollywood entertainer dies, that the world just freaks out and gets all upset about it. It's all over the news, it's in the magazines, everyone talks about it. A great man or woman of God, a saint of God dies, and there's hardly a mention of it—the world is not worthy of them. But, guess what? This world is not our home. Amen? We're just passing through, so don't expect them to pat you on the back or to applaud you.

Verse 38, "...they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." You want to follow Jesus Christ? Here it is.

He closes with their expectations, verses 39-40, "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith." Now, notice, "And these,"—we just read about—"all, having obtained a good report through faith,"—so they were men and women of faith as much as anyone else in the chapter—"received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us,"—there's that word "better" again, a key word in Hebrews—"that they without us should not be made perfect," or complete. The "promise" there is probably a reference to the new covenant fulfilled in the promise to send the Messiah, the Savior of the world. The Old Testament saints that we've just been reading about, looked forward to the promise, hadn't yet received it, but they lived by faith and they believed God. They looked forward.

We look backward at what Christ has already done. They looked forward to what He will do by faith; we look back at what He's done by faith. He's talking about they had, "...received not the promise,"—of the new covenant of the Savior—"God having provided some better thing for us,"—we who have actually lived in the new covenant and have the better promises, the better Priest, the better sacrifice, the better covenant—"...that they without us should not be made perfect,"—or complete, so that God would one day resurrect the Old Testament saints, they would join the New Testament saints, and they will reign with Christ for a thousand years. (

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Remember that this whole chapter was brought about because he quoted the book of Habakkuk, "...the just shall live by faith." This is the superior principle—not by sight, not by feeling, not by emotions—we trust God, we believe God, we live by faith. Amen? No matter what we see, no matter what we feel, we have the promises of God. Faith is so important to understand, it's based on two things: It's based on the revelation of God and His promises in His Word, the promises of God revealed in His Word. Your faith must be founded on the Word of God. How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!

You must read the Bible, you must study the Bible, you must feed on the Bible because, "...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So, you're not going to psych yourself up to faith, you're not going to be able to have greater faith or confident faith in God, unless you know the promises of God and you understand them; and then the Holy Spirit also speaks to our spirits that we are His children, and then we know that God loves us and we can trust Him by faith. We have a subjective experience of trusting God, believing in God; we have the objective truth of God's Word, which we hide in our heart, we live by faith, not by sight. What a

marvelous principle it is, as believers today in the new covenant, living by faith. That's how the just shall live. Let's pray.