

THE GRACE OF FAITH

Hebrews 11: 32- 40

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not

worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

This catalog of exploits was given to remind us of God's incredible blessing on the faith of Old Testament believers. Heroes were listed, such as Gideon and Samson (Hebrews 11:32). Accomplishments such as military success and miraculous survival were also given (Hebrews 11:33–34). Its general idea is that God rewards true faith—which means trust.

Prior verses mentioned "Samuel and the prophets," and the miracle of resurrection occurred in the ministries of two of the Old Testament's greatest prophets, Elijah and Elisha. Both were credited with raising a dead person

back to life. Elijah did so for a widow's son (1 Kings 17:17–24) and Elisha for a Shunammite woman's child (2 Kings 4:18–37). This represents the ultimate victory: **a conquering of death itself!**

The purpose of this entire letter has been to encourage persecuted Christians to "hold fast" to their faith.

After describing the faithful, trusting, steadfast examples of heroes of the Old Testament, the writer of Hebrews reminds us of what those earlier believers had to endure in order to achieve those results. The point here, is that God was faithful to these believers, and they trusted Him despite their suffering.

Today, I would like to share on **“THE GRACE OF FAITH”**

- 1.The Records and Exploits of Faith
2. The Endurance of Faith
3. The Grace of Faith

The writer of Hebrews finds that there are more examples of victorious and enduring faith than he can list. He selects certain people and achievements from the books of Judges, Samuel, Kings and Daniel to remind us of the triumphs of faith. People suffered terrible tragedies, extreme hardships and cruel tortures, but they held on in faith. They refused to give in to their persecutors or to forsake their trust in God.

I. THE RECORDS AND EXPLOITS OF FAITH.

A. The Records of Faith.

1. Gideon, Judges 6:11.

He was an eminent instrument raised up of God to deliver his people from the oppression of the Midianites. He was a person of mean tribe and family, called from a mean employment (threshing wheat), and saluted by an angel of God in this surprising manner, *“The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of war.”*

It is the excellency of faith that, while it helps men to do great things, it keeps them from having high and great thoughts of themselves.

2. Barak.

He was an instrument raised up to deliver Israel out of the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan. (Judges 4)

He obtained a great victory by his faith over all the host of Sisera. His faith taught him to return all the praise and glory to God:

This is the nature of faith; it has recourse unto God in all dangers and difficulties, and then makes grateful returns to God for all mercies and deliverances.

3. Samson.

An instrument that God raised up to deliver Israel from the Philistines. His story is in Judges 13:1-16, and from it we learn that the grace of faith is the strength of the soul for great service.

- By faith the servants of God shall overcome even the roaring lion.
- True faith is acknowledged and accepted, even when mingled with many failings.
- The believer's faith endures to the end, and, in dying, gives him victory over death and all his deadly enemies; his greatest conquest he gains by dying.

4. Jephthah, Judges 11:1-40,

He was raised up to deliver Israel from the Ammonites. As various and new enemies rise up against the people of God, various and new deliverers are raised up for them.

In the story of Jephthah:

- The grace of God often finds out, and fastens upon, the most undeserving and ill-deserving persons, to do great things for them and by them. Jephthah was the son of a harlot.
- Faith, wherever it is, will put men upon acknowledging God in all their ways (Judges

11:11).Jephthah rehearsed all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh.

- Faith will make men bold and venturous in a good cause.

5. David,

His first appearance on the stage of the world was a great evidence of his faith. When young, having slain the lion and the bear, his faith in God encouraged him to encounter the great Goliath, and helped him to triumph over him. The same faith enabled him to bear patiently the ungrateful malice of Saul and his favorites, and to wait till God should put him into possession of the promised power and dignity. The same faith made him a very successful and victorious prince, and, after a long life of virtue and honour.

6. Samuel,

God revealed himself to Samuel when he was but a child, and continued to do so till his death.

Through his story:

- Those who exercise faith early are those who likely grow up to some eminence. Eminence means fame or recognized superiority.
- Those whose business is to reveal the mind and will of God to others had need to be well established in the belief of it themselves.

The Exploits of Faith.

“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, they wrought righteousness, they obtained promises, they stopped the mouths of lions, [probably referring to Daniel] they quenched the violence of fire, [probably referring to the three Hebrew children delivered from the fiery furnace] they escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness they were made strong, they waxed valiant in fight, and they turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again” Hebrews 11:33-35

These are the positive sides to faith:

1. By faith they subdued kingdoms, Hebrews 11:33. Thus did David, Joshua, and many of the judges.

The interests and powers of kings and kingdoms are often set up in opposition to God and his people but God can easily subdue all those kings and kingdoms that set themselves to oppose him.

Faith is a suitable and excellent qualification of those who fight in the ways of the Lord. It makes them just, bold, and wise.

2. They wrought righteousness, both in their public and personal capacities. They turned many from idolatry to the ways of righteousness. They believed God, and it was imputed to them for righteousness. They walked and acted righteously towards God and man.

What can we learn here?

- It is a greater honor and happiness to work righteousness than to work miracles; faith is an active principle of universal righteousness.

3. They obtained promises, both general and special. It is faith that gives us an interest in the promises, it is by faith that we have the comfort of the promises, and it is by faith that we are prepared to wait for the promises, and in due time to receive them.

4. They stopped the mouths of lions;

So did Samson in **Judges 14:5; Judges 14:6**, and David in **1 Samuel 17:34; 1 Samuel 17:35**, and **Daniel in Daniel 6:22**.

What do we learn from them?

- The power of God is above the power of the creature.

- Faith engages the power of God for his people, whenever it shall be for his glory, to overcome brute beasts and brutish men.

5. They quenched the violence of the fire, Hebrews 11:34.

Moses, by the prayer of faith, quenched the fire of God's wrath that was kindled against the people of Israel, **Numbers 11:1- 2**. So did the three children, or rather mighty champions, **Daniel 3:17-27**. Their faith in God, refusing to worship the golden image, exposed them to the fiery furnace which Nebuchadnezzar had prepared for them, and their faith engaged for them that power and presence of God in the furnace which quenched the violence of the fire, so that not so much as the smell thereof passed on them.

6. They escaped the edge of the sword.

Thus David escaped the sword of Goliath and of Saul; and Mordecai and the Jews escaped the sword of Haman. The swords of men are held in the hand of God, and He can blunt the edge of the sword, and turn it away from his people against their enemies when He pleases.

Faith takes hold of the hand of God which has hold of the swords of men; and God has often suffered himself to be prevailed upon by the faith of his people.

7. Out of weakness they were made strong. From national weakness, into which the Jews often fell by their unbelief; upon the revival of their faith, all their interest and affairs revived and flourished. From bodily weakness; thus Hezekiah, believing the word of God, recovered out of a mortal distemper, and he ascribed his recovery to the promise and power of God (**Isaiah 38:15- 16**),

It is the same grace of faith that from spiritual weakness helps men to recover and renew their strength.

8. They grew valiant in fight. So did Joshua, the judges, and David. True faith gives truest courage and patience, as it discerns the

strength of God, and thereby the weakness of all his enemies.

9. Women received their dead raised to life again, Hebrews 11:35.

So did the widow of Zarepath (1 Kings 17:23), and the Shunamite, 2 Kings 4:36.

What can we learn from here?

- In Christ there is neither male nor female. Many of the weaker sex have been strong in faith.
- Though the covenant of grace takes in the children of believers, yet it leaves them subject to natural death.
- God has sometimes yielded so far to the tender affections of sorrowful women as to restore their dead children to life again. Like Christ who had compassion on the widow of Nain when He saw her weeping. Luke 7:12

It is amazing to see things done through the faith of these heroes. So like them who conquered and

wrought righteousness, faith helps us to do exploits and make the record of being witnesses of God's greatness.

But how about when we are in the midst of rough and painful times?

II. THE ENDURANCE OF FAITH.

The man of faith can also know defeat and discouragement.

Hebrews 11:35, “others were tortured, not accepting deliverance.”

It is possible for a person to be victorious over the enemy, to wax valiant in battle, to subdue the aliens, but it is also possible for the man of faith to be tortured for his faith. **Through faith they believed to the point of not accepting deliverance.**

TORTURED upon the **TYMPANUM**- an instrument of torture in the shape of a large drum, or wheel,

on which criminals were stretched in order to be beaten to death with sticks and rods.

1. They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, Hebrews 11:35. They were put upon the rack, to make them renounce their God, their Saviour, and their religion.

Their enemies offered to save them from torture, but they would not compromise their faith. They would not sacrifice their faith at the price of apostasy. They accepted the truth of God's Word as more important than their own lives. Their orientation was to something far greater than their personal desires.

2. They endured trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, and bonds and imprisonment, Hebrews 11:36.

They were persecuted in their reputation by mockings, which are cruel to an ingenuous mind; in their persons by scourging, the punishment of slaves; in their liberty by bonds and imprisonment.

3. They were put to death in the most cruel manner some were stoned, as Zechariah (**2 Chronicles 24:21**), sawn asunder, as Isaiah by Manasseh. They were tempted or some read it, burnt.

4. They were slain with the sword. All sorts of deaths were prepared for them; their enemies clothed death in all the array of cruelty and terror, and yet they boldly met death and endured it.

Their enemies spared some, only to prolong their misery, and wear out all their patience; for they were forced to wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented.

Such sufferings as these they endured then for their faith; and such they endured through the power of the grace of faith.

III. THE GRACE OF FAITH.

Hebrews 11: 39- 40 tells us *“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”*

We need the grace of faith to continue believing God, even though our situations may be unclear, or even if there is no sign of hope. **1 Corinthians 13: 12** *Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.*

It is by God's grace that we are saved through faith and it is this faith that gives us the grace to live through many dangers, toils and snares of life. This faith that we have in Jesus as He said, *“believe in*

God, believe also in me,” makes us overcomers and gives us the endurance until we receive the promises of God. The finished work of Jesus on the cross made grace abound in us. We have so much grace today because He paid it through His death.

2 Corinthians 12: 9- *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness....”*

One day through the grace of faith in the work of Christ these awaits us:

1. A most honorable character and commendation from God, the true Judge and fountain of honour

The world considers that the righteous are not worthy to live in the world, and God declares the world is not worthy of them. **It is not fit that good men should have their rest in this world.** Therefore God receives them out of it, to that world that is suitable to them, and yet far beyond the merit of all their services and sufferings.

2. A good report (Hebrews 11:39) of all good men, and of the truth itself, and have the honour to be enrolled in this sacred calendar of the Old-Testament worthies, **God's witnesses.**

3. A provision of something better.

"God has provided something better for us, so that apart from us - they would not be made perfect."
v. 40

It is at the very end of the most glorious chapter on 'faith' that the writer explains, why his long list of men and women of faith did not receive the promises God made them.

Why?-However wonderful the promises He gave to Israel, God planned to give us - and them - something even better.

These people could not receive the promised inheritance until Christ came. By his death he made complete salvation possible, so that God can

accept believers like us as perfect in him. We will enjoy the fulfilment of our faith.

The apostle tells the Hebrews, that God had provided some better things for them. This better thing is the clearer revelation of the promised salvation. The promises of the New Covenant which was cut at Calvary, with its victory over sin and death, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and all the privileges that come with our great salvation, was secured at the Cross.

Since the gospel is the end and perfection of the Old Testament, it is expected that our faith should be as much more perfect than the faith of the Old-Testament saints. We have the grace of faith based in the works of Christ on the cross. And as our advantages, with the better things God has provided for us, are so much beyond theirs, so should our obedience of faith, patience of hope, and labour of love, be greater.

CONCLUSION:

True faith does not compromise truth.

Some people who walk by faith accept the worst possible situations in their lives as an act of God. Throughout church history, Christians were willing to suffer rather than to deny their Lord. They knew that they had a wonderful future ahead. Faith is a grace that draws from heaven God's providential help in times of need. Faith gives the believer steadfastness during times of pressure.

We need to 'hold fast' to our faith. THE GRACE OF FAITH helps us to do great things, it keeps us from having high and great thoughts of ourselves. This grace will put us upon acknowledging God in all our ways and will make us bold and venturesome in a good cause.

A man who has this grace has recourse unto God in all dangers and difficulties, and then makes grateful returns to God for all mercies and deliverances. A man who has this grace endures to the end, and, in dying, gives him victory over death and all his deadly enemies; his greatest conquest he gains by dying.