

Hebrews 11:23-40

For the last two weeks, we have been studying the heroes of faith in Chapter 11.

First we saw examples of faith in the antediluvian times.

Abel showed us the *way* of faith; Enoch the *walk* of faith; and Noah illustrated the *witness* of faith.

Then the writer spoke of the faith of the patriarchs.

In the case of all three men, the Holy Spirit gives us only a snapshot, showing their faith near the end of their life.

Isaac, who had resisted God's will and favoured his eldest son Esau, finally had faith enough to accept God's ruling that the elder should serve the younger.

Jacob, by faith, was allowed to look into the future of the children of Israel, and following God's directions, placed Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, at the head of their own tribes in Israel, just like his own sons.

Joseph, whose whole life was characterized by a walk of faith, was especially recognized in this chapter for his faith in connection with Israel's covenant blessings.

Although at the top of the ladder in the society of Egypt, he never forgot God's

covenant promises to Israel, and the land in which they were centred.

V 22 **"By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."**

To his dying day, Joseph remained a stranger and a pilgrim in Egypt.

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Now we begin a new section, covering the period from Moses to the latter prophets.

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The first one we read about, of course, is that great man of faith, Moses.

As is the case with many godly men, Moses came of godly parentage.

They certainly did not live in good times.

When they began their married life, they were slaves in Egypt, and Pharaoh had issued a cruel order to limit their nation's growth.

Exodus 1:22 **"And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive."**

Under such circumstances, many young people of lesser faith would have despaired of marriage, and certainly of bringing children into such a world, but Moses' parents determined to walk by faith.

Hebrews 11:24 **"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment."**

I doubt if they had any idea what they were going to do when the baby got too old to hide.

But they took the first step of faith, a step that endangered their lives, and left the future in His hands.

Often faith has to walk one step at a time, and trust God for the *next* step.

Well, we all know the story. Moses' mother made an ark, and his sister placed it in the reeds, and eventually Pharaoh's daughter found and adopted the little boy.

Exodus 2:6 says, **"And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children."**

I liked what Billy Martin said: "The
destiny of a nation floated on a tear."

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There is a verse in Exodus 2 that is
significant when we consider it in the
light of Hebrews 11.

Exodus 2:9 **"And Pharaoh's daughter said
unto her, Take this child away, and
nurse it for me, and I will give thee
thy wages. And the women took the
child, and nursed it.**

Moses was brought up in his parent's home
for only a short period, and yet his
mother instilled in him his national
identity and his faith in the one true
God.

The very early years of a child's life are
so very important.

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And then, in the account in Exodus, we leap ahead from those early years in Moses' life to the time when he was a mature man of 40.

Exodus 2:11-12 **"And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.**

¹² **And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand."**

Looking at this account, it would seem that Moses ran ahead of the Lord, acting in uncontrolled anger.

We must consider the fact that there was a good possibility that Moses might have been the next Pharaoh.

If he had just kept his cool, could he not have been used to bring great benefit to his people?

It seemed that way, but Hebrews 11 gives us a much different picture of Moses.

No doubt his actions were guided by anger, but the motivation that brought him down to visit his people in the first place was the result of a mature faith, acting upon spiritual values.

You see, things had been happening in Moses' life.

Hebrews 11:24-26 **"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 unto the recompence of the reward."

----"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

Common sense would argue that Moses should have kept quiet and preserved his position as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

As has already been mentioned, he probably would have been the next Pharaoh in Egypt, or at least an important personage.

Should he not have used this to advantage if he desired to help the Hebrew slaves? And then there was also the question of gratitude.

He owed his life to his adopted mother, and to refuse such kindness from her would look like complete ingratitude.

And would this not incur the righteous anger of Pharaoh?

Should he not thank Providence for placing him in such a key position in Egypt?

Should he not bide his time in this comfortable existence in the court?

Such were the temptations that Moses must have wrestled with.

But as a mature man, with a mature faith, he made his decision.

He **"refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."**

He chose **"rather to suffer affliction with
the people of God."**

He esteemed **"the reproach of Christ greater
riches than the treasures in Egypt."**

Yes, he might have acted in rage to defend his brethren, but the path that led him to visit the Israelites, and indeed to even consider these slaves to be his people, and Jehovah his God, was the result of a walk of faith, and, no doubt, a godly mother's influence in those early years.

V 27 **"By faith he forsook Egypt, not
fearing the wrath of the king: for he
endured, as seeing him who is
invisible."**

On the surface, the account in Exodus seems to disagree with the words penned here in Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:27 says, **"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king."** But Exodus 2: 14-15 says "---
And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.

¹⁵ Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well."

Yes, Moses feared the wrath of the king, and with good reason.

This did not require a special revelation.

It was just plain common sense.

But what about V27 of Hebrews that says, **"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."**

Well, actually, Moses forsook Egypt twice.

Because of his rather rash actions, he was forced to flee Egypt to preserve his own life.

But before that, he had *by faith* already forsaken Egypt with all its power and pleasures, and had aligned himself with Israel and Israel's God, in spite of the certainty of Pharaoh's wrath.

And also, much later in his life, he again, by faith, feared not the wrath of Pharaoh.

Yes, 40 years later, he returned to Egypt and demanded the release of the children of Israel.

By faith, Moses returned to the land from which he had previously fled.

He returned to a land where no doubt he was still a wanted man, and confronted Pharaoh without fear.

His confidence was in his God who was
invisible, but also all powerful.

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As Christians, we should be aware of the
fact that those who forsake Egypt must
expect the wrath of man.

However, we need not fear, for we are under
the conduct of God, of whom the
scriptures have said --"**Surely the
wrath of man shall praise thee: the
remainder of wrath shalt thou
restrain.**" Psalm 76:10

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V 28 "**Through faith he kept the passover,
and the sprinkling of blood, lest he
that destroyed the firstborn should
touch them.**"

On that first Passover night when the death
angel visited Egypt, Moses, by faith,

followed God's instructions, and convinced the people to do the same. Obedience was vital, because it was the one plague that was visited upon *all* Egypt. Only the blood made the difference.

If an Israelite family watched and prayed ever so sincerely that night, but neglected the blood on the door, their firstborn would have died along with the firstborn of Egypt.

And scripture tells us that the entire world is under God's judgment because of sin.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Only the blood of Christ will stay God's judgment.

Only those, who, like Moses, believe God and apply the blood, will be saved.

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V 29 **"By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned."**

When Israel saw the Red sea blocking their only path of escape, it seemed their doom was certain.

But, in fact, it was the hour of their greatest victory.

Behind them was the enraged army of Pharaoh with its chariots and horsemen.

On either side, the mountains hemmed them in.

In front of them lay the Red sea, blockading further advancement.

But verse 29 says, **"By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land."**

But, really, it wasn't their faith, it was Moses' faith.

Let's turn to Exodus 14:10-13. "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.

¹¹ And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?

¹² Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

13 **And Moses said unto the people,
Fear ye not, stand still, and see the
salvation of the LORD, which he will
shew to you to day: for the Egyptians
whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see
them again no more for ever."**

You see, Satan, who is pictured here by
Pharaoh, is determined to hold onto his
slaves in Egypt.

And, indeed, the obvious indications are
that the sinner is hopelessly lost.

But *through faith* we can cross the waters of
death and arrive safely on the shore of
a new life.

For Israel, that which seemed to be the
ultimate barrier was actually the
pathway to life.

They entered the Red Sea as slaves. They
came out as a free nation.

And the sea that had seemed to be the ultimate barrier to their freedom was the same sea by which God consumed their enemies.

Pharaoh would never again be their master. Egypt would never again be their place of servitude.

Exodus 14:13 **"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever."**

Satan is a defeated foe, and we are a free people.

We need not serve sin anymore.

We need not be conquered, but instead we can, and should, be a nation going

forth to conquer, under our great
Joshua.

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This brings us to our next hero of faith,
Joshua.

V 30 **"By faith the walls of Jericho fell
down, after they were compassed about
seven days."**

Jericho was a border city, and with its
strong walls, it was an impregnable
fortress.

You might say it was the Canaanites' front
line of defence.

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In type, the Promised Land, although it
sometimes pictures Heaven, also speaks
of the Christian's victorious life in
Christ.

The Christian, having left the wilderness
and crossed the Jordan, now enters into
a land where he is to be a soldier of
Jesus Christ under His heavenly Joshua.
Immediately, his way is blocked by his own
personal Jericho.

By faith, he can have victory as a soldier
of Jesus Christ, or be driven back to
the wilderness to wander as a babe in
Christ.

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In Joshua Chapter 6, we find General Joshua
being given unusual orders for a
soldier at the head of an army.

Please turn with me to Joshua Chapter 6.

V 2-4 **"And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I
have given into thine hand Jericho, and
the king thereof, and the mighty men of
valour.**

³ And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

⁴ And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets."

The method prescribed seemed very improbable as a means to conquer a city, and also this procedure would expose them to the daily ridicule of their enemies.

But this was God's method, and it was one which demonstrated to them that their strength was not in themselves, but in God.

It was a lesson that would hold the key to further victory.

And also, the ultimate victory over Jericho served to terrify and demoralize the Canaanites of the land, while at the same time strengthened the faith of God's people.

You might say it got them off on the right foot.

So Jericho was an important victory.

It set the stage for further battles.

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But there was one Canaanite who had already surrendered to the God of Israel, even before Israel had entered the land.

This Canaanite was the harlot Rahab, who, by faith, saved herself and her family.

Here was a woman who was counted an enemy.

She was a Canaanite and also a harlot.

She was a stranger to the Commonwealth of Israel, and yet, by her faith, and

God's divine grace, she was accepted into the nation of Israel, and even appears in the lineage of Jesus Christ. By faith, she had already made her decision, and so **"received the spies with peace."** At the risk of her own life, she allied herself with her former enemies, and not only hid them, but let them down through a window on a scarlet rope, and showed them the best way to make a safe escape.

They in turn promised protection for herself and her family.

Joshua 2: 18 **"Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and**

thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee."

There is a message here in that **"scarlet thread in the window."**

Yes, there is a **"scarlet thread"** running through the entire scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

The coats of skins, the blood of the Passover, the animal sacrifices, all point to the blood of Christ, and promise divine protection.

It is the way of faith.

V 31 **"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."**

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And now we come to the last section of Chapter 11.

Here the writer does not go into detail because the multitude of faithful is so great that it cannot be contained in one chapter.

But these individuals are not passed over quickly because they were less important, for names like David and Samuel are included in this group.

V 32-35 **"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:**

³³ **Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.**

³⁴ **Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed**

**valiant in fight, turned to flight the
armies of the aliens."**

All the men mentioned here were rulers in
Israel.

For instance, Gideon, Barak, Samson,
Jephthae and Samuel were all judges;
and David, of course, was a king.

They were all rulers, and they were all
engaged in battles for God.

And each one of them won the victory by
faith.

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Gideon was raised up by God to defeat the
Midianites who were oppressing His
people.

We find this account in Judges 6:11-12.

**"And there came an angel of the LORD, and
sat under an oak which was in Ophrah,
that pertained unto Joash the**

Abiezrite: 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."

Now, this was not the usual place to thresh wheat.

You should do it up on a hill where there is a good wind.

In those days, you threshed wheat by throwing it up into the air, and the wind would blow the chaff away.

Gideon was down by the wine press, down in the valley where there was not much wind.

So he would throw the wheat up into the air, and the chaff would fall down his neck!

I cannot think of a more miserable process.
However, he was forced to thresh it there in
spite of the difficulty because the
Midianites stole everything they grew.
So Gideon was hiding.

He was not a mighty warrior with an army.

He was just trying to make a living the
best way he knew how.

When the angel said, "**The LORD is with thee,
thou mighty man of valour,**" he probably
looked over his shoulder and thought,
Who, me?

Then Gideon reminds the angel that he was
not a special person, he was, in fact,
a nobody.

Judges 6:15 **"And he said unto him, Oh my
Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel?
behold, my family is poor in Manasseh,**

and I am the least in my father's house."

But, actually, that was exactly why God wanted him, and that is exactly why God reduced his mighty army of 32,000 men to a mere 300.

It wasn't numbers that God needed. He needed faith, and the recognition that the victory was the Lord's.

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Then there was Samson, a man who was a Nazarite from his birth, and yet a man who failed many times to live a separated life.

However, we find him listed here in the heroes of faith, and wonder why.

Judges 15:20 says, **"And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years."**

There are no details given about those 20 years as a judge, but apparently he had a faith that earned him a place in this chapter.

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And there were other great men mentioned in Hebrews 11.

There was David, a man after God's own heart; there was Samuel, the faithful judge, serving God from childhood to old age; and, of course, the prophets.

I think we are all familiar with these men of faith, so I will not take time in this lesson to study their lives.

However, I would like to speak about the **"others"** mentioned in V 35-36 because there is a particular lesson here for us.

These "**others**" are the heroes of faith, although unknown to us, who are nevertheless dear to God.

V 35-38 "**Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:**

³⁶ **And others 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:) they wandered in deserts, and in**

mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

We all recognize these men and women as the martyrs of our faith.

There is much that could be said about these dear servants of God who suffered for their faith in times past.

And also there are those in our day who still languish in prisons and endure tortures for His sake.

But, in these verses, there is something that has bothered Christians for centuries.

Verse 34 tells of those who **"Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."**

Now, we all love stories about those who have gotten the victory--"**escaped the edge of the sword**"--and have done exploits for the Lord.

But what about these "**others**" who "**were slain with the sword**"?

Why did some have victory over their enemies, while others fled before their enemies, only to be caught and destroyed?

Hard to figure out, isn't it?

This brings up the question, Why do the righteous suffer?

We love to quote the verses in Psalms 34:7 and also V 17 that says "**The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.**" and "**The righteous cry, and the LORD**

**heareth, and delivereth them out of all
their troubles."**

And these truly are promises to rejoice in,
for the Lord does deliver.

But the Lord is not *bound* to deliver if He
has something better for us, as He did
for His martyrs.

Stephen, before his death, accused the Jews
by saying, "**Which of the prophets have
not your fathers persecuted?**"

No, the prophets never had an easy time, and
they were faithful men.

Also, our Lord said, "**In the world ye shall
have tribulation: but be of good cheer;
I have overcome the world.**"

And Paul and Barnabas, on their missionary
journey, went "**Confirming the souls of
the disciples, and exhorting them to
continue in the faith, and that we must**

through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

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So in God's wisdom, there are many people who have demonstrated their faith by winning battles and by being delivered from harm, but there are "**others,**" multitudes of them, who have suffered for the faith.

And right now, there are literally thousands of heroes of faith, and you and I know some of them, who are lying on beds of pain.

Yes, God chooses our path. We have no control over that, but we can choose to make it a walk of faith.

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V 39-40 " **And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.**"

And where is this report?

Well, I am sure God has a record of His faithful in heaven, but, actually, we are reading some of His report right here in Hebrews 11.

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise."

And what is the promise that they have not received as yet?

Well, the faith of these Old Testament saints was strong, but they lived in the days of types and shadows. The substance had not yet arrived.

V 40 **"God having provided some better thing
for us, that they without us should not
be made perfect."** (or complete)

Yes, we live in a day that they could only
look forward to.

We live in the day of the new covenant which
Christ has purchased by the shedding of
His own precious blood.

Yes, we are a privileged people!

Should our faith not be at least as great as
theirs?

God has given us so much to have faith in.