

A Good Testimony Through Faith - Sunday, March 8th

And we will complete chapter 11 today. I might be the only one who is sorry to see this chapter go. I have thoroughly enjoyed going through chapter 11 and I look forward to preaching it again one day and I'm not even completely finished with it.

But last week we took out of our chapter the last examples that the author gave us in talking about by faith these things happened and it mostly centered around the nation of Israel and of course we end it with Rahab who's the last named example that the writer gives us. And last week we talked about how the enemy will always seek to destroy our faith. He'll always seek to bring death where Jesus wants to bring life.

And as we talked about the examples last week, we had the Passover lamb which was killed that spared the firstborn children. We had the Red Sea that was opened up so that the children of Israel could walk across with the armies of Egypt pressing hard behind them. And then we also talked about the walls of Jericho.

And I equated all three of these to the ways the enemy tries to steal, kill, and destroy our faith. But God always makes a way. And I hope I shared this enough last week.

My whole purpose of the sermon was to share how having faith in God is an adventure because we will come up against these circumstances but yet if we are following and being obedient to God, He gives us victory in all of those circumstances. Even in death we have victory through Jesus Christ. Even when we're being pressed and there's a Red Sea in front of us and an army behind us, God will make a way for us to walk through on dry ground.

And when there are mountains in front of us, God knocks them flat and gives us flat ground to walk upon to conquer our enemies. And that's the adventure of faith that you and I have. The promise that we have through God.

And ultimately as we do these things and accomplish these things, the Rahabs of the world will see the faith that we have in God, the love that we have for one another, and ultimately want to follow our Savior Jesus Christ. Because that is the true and ultimate goal of faith. It is to go and make disciples of all nations, tribes, and tongues.

And we do that by being obedient to the Father. So the author states in the opening passage today in verse 32 where we're going to start, he says basically, what more shall I say? And based upon your reaction so far, you're tired of everything I have to say about faith. And the author felt the same.

He has described efficiently, or sufficiently should I say, everything he needs to let us know about how to live by faith. Because the examples could continue indefinitely as we're going to see this morning from the Old Testament characters. But I find it interesting that in these verses today, he's going to name six people.

He doesn't talk about them, but if you were to look at these six people, they range from people who are absolutely the worst people you could think of to the greatest people you could think of. Which I believe Samuel fits in that arena. But yet they all live in the arena of faith, just like you and I. So I believe what that gives, it gives us hope no matter where you find yourself in life.

Whether you're riding the waves on top of everything, or you're just scraping bottom and trying to get by. We have hope in faith. And through faith we can be inspired to do great deeds, but yet that same faith gives us the fortitude to walk through the lowest valleys.

So if you know, we're going to actually start in verse 39. So if you'll turn with me to Hebrews 11, or you can read it on the screen. Well, you can read most of it on the screen, quite get all of it.

Apologize, we're working on our PowerPoint, or our pro-presenter presentations. But starting in verse 39 of chapter 11, it says, And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise. God, having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

There's a unity between the Old Testament believers and you and I. Let's pray this morning. Father, we thank you for your Word. Father, I just pray that you would let peace reign in my heart.

God, that you would give me a comfort to speak the words that you've given me to speak today. Lord, that my mouth would be anointed, and my mind would be anointed to think and say that which you would lead and need me to say this morning. But Father, I also pray for our ears and our hearts.

God, that you would let us hear what you have from us today. Because Lord, your Word speaks life and truth to us, no matter the situation we find ourselves in. So this morning, as we talk about the testimony that you give us through faith, help us to understand the walk of life that you have us on.

And that as we are obedient to you, you will accomplish all things in our life. And you will bring us to a desired end, no matter what we feel like is happening. Give us the faith and the confidence to see that in you, and the trust to know that you're working on our behalf.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Just a little bit of history.

Do you guys know when I started Chapter 11 in Hebrews? You remember the day? It was last year, for one. November 14th, I did my first sermon in Chapter 11. Now, give me a little bit of leeway.

We had Christmas, and I had a couple guest speakers in there, but we spent about three months on this chapter. And I purposely planned to spend quite a bit of time. I didn't know that it would be three months, but I did plan to spend a little bit of time, because there's a lot in Chapter 11.

And I barely scratched the surface in what I believe could have been talked about. And Matthew Henry, he's a commentator. He wrote this, as I was reading this week, I found this quote from him, and it says, this is a guy who wrote a commentary on the Bible.

He says, after all of our searches into the Scripture, there is more to be learned in them. So even as we have spent three months in Chapter 11, I want you to know there's a lot more. And I brought my Matthew Henry's commentary.

Have you ever read Matthew Henry's commentary? I can't even read this book now. You know why? Because he's got six columns on a page, and it is magnifying glass needed for me to see what this guy wrote. And he says, after all of our searches into Scripture, I've not even begun to scratch the surface of what is in there for me to know.

That is why we must always approach Scripture with awe, and what can I learn today? And that is why reading the Bible once isn't enough. We are to read it, and reread it, and reread it, because we need the Word of God in every season of our life. How many of you are in the same season today that you were last year? Five years ago? Ten? Last week, maybe? There's Scripture, and it speaks to us in the moment that we find ourselves, and it brings life to us in the time and the season that we're walking with God.

And that's why we always have to have the Scripture in our heart, because whether we're familiar with it, or we're unfamiliar with it, as we read it, the Holy Spirit is able to work inside of us and bring Scripture to our mind in a way that we never understood before. And in a way, that got me thinking in my own life of where I've come from to where I am today, and I would encourage you also to take that journey, because if you're following God, it shouldn't be the same old, same old. There should be some change.

And even now, as you do that, aren't you glad that God doesn't leave you the way that He finds us, and that He brings us on this journey to say, you know what? There's much more that you can be. There's a better version of you that Jesus Christ brings out through us. And in a way, our passage portrays this graphic of growth that we should see in our own life, because we all have shortcomings in our life.

We all have things that we fight with. We all have sins that we struggle with. And I'm not going to talk about every aspect of all of them.

You're going to have to do your own study. You're going to have to follow the Holy Spirit and let Him speak to you in these things. But as we share of, really, the four men in this passage of verse 32 that are the judges, we're going to spend most of our time on this morning.

We're going to see something that we should be able to identify with in our own lives. So we are going to jump back up to verse 32 in chapter 11, and this is what that scripture says. It says, What more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak, of Samson and Japheth, also of David and Samuel, and all of the prophets.

And really, He encompasses all of the Old Testament heroes of faith that He could talk about. Now, with the exclusion of David and Samuel, these four other names given, specifically talking about their personal character, are probably some of the bottom-of-the-barrel type people you could find in the Old Testament scripture. In particular, of the judges, these four are probably the least stellar men in, well, men, they're all men, men that you could think of to give an example of faith.

And I know that as we look at them, well, I'm not going to lump you in this, I'll lump me in. I know as I looked at them, I saw way more of me than I wanted to see as I studied these guys. But I really think that they're purposely chosen to give us an example of what faith in Jesus really looks like.

Because there's a couple reasons. Prior to this, all the examples were given to us in a chronological order. These four, these six men, are not.

They're kind of all jumbled up in there. They're not chronological in the way that they appear in the Bible. So there's something that He's trying to teach us from that.

So I want to cover these four guys real quick, these judges, in kind of a character overview. And I don't know, it might not seem very sermon-type, sermon-like, but I'm going to just cover them and point out their faults. What a good preacher, huh? He's just gonna come here and I'm gonna pick all their faults and I'm gonna show them to you.

So be nice to me. See, these men, plus all of the other heroes mentioned before in chapter 11, they're men and women just like us. I mean, they live life, they struggle, they eat, they sleep, they bleed, you know, they celebrate life when a baby's born, they mourn when death hits them.

You know, they question, God, why this? They struggle with armies that are attacking them, difficult seasons. All of the same things you and I face day in and day out, they did as well, just like us. But yet, it is faith in God that allows them to be and do more than they're capable of, just like us.

We couldn't do it without the Holy Spirit, they couldn't do it without the Spirit of God. So let's talk about Gideon and then we'll move through these guys real quick. Gideon is known for two things, you could use a fleece, he wants it wet one day, he wants it dry the next day, he wants it folded, put away the third day, he wants it served with lamb the following, I don't know.

He has all these requests that he's asking God for the fleece to know if God is actually calling him and then most other people know that this is the judge that led 300 people to fight an army of a hundred thousand

and one. That's the two things that most of us know about Gideon. But you know, he is highlighted as you read about him in Judges chapter 6 through 8. Most of what you're going to see is fear and questions that come from Gideon.

He's afraid to be, to be, to do what God has called him to do. I mean, he sees an angel of God and says, go and do this thing. And he's like, I don't know, maybe, maybe not.

He has lots of doubt in his life. After he's done all these things and he's judging Israel, he seemed to be a harsh and vengeful leader to the nation of Israel. He's very ruthless.

If we were doing it in today's world, it would be a zero-star review for boss of the year. Nobody would want him. Do not recommend.

Barak is really no better. He's found in Judges chapter 4. You know why you don't really know who Barak is very much? Because you know his counterpart, Deborah. She was the judge who went out and defeated the armies, but Barak was the one called, but he was afraid.

And so he hid behind the skirts of a woman to be a leader. He lacked confidence or he was a coward. Samson is a prototypical portrayal of many of people in the world today.

He's found in Judges chapter 13 through 16. As you read about Samson, things that stand out about him as he is. He is about as lustful of things in life and all the trappings that come with it, seeking pleasure in all the wrong places with very little morals or guiding compasses.

He was a Nazarite, which meant he was set apart to do something specific, and he truly disregarded all of it. In other words, there were things that he was not supposed to do, but he disregarded holiness. In other words, he purposely led a spiritually immature life.

God had called him to something and he purposely chose not to do that. We see that in a lot of people today. He was ruled by his emotions.

He was a petulant man-child. If you read about Samson, you see him in different ways, and he's like, I want that woman, get her for me. And he just ruled by whatever the emotion of the moment was.

It led him, and he had no self-control, no restraint, none at all. He did whatever he wanted. He was driven by impulses, driven by anger with a tinge of rage on the edges, and we see a lot of him in people around us, but mostly we should look inward.

And then the last guy that we have here is Japheth. To me, the bottom of the barrel, the most horrible man listed, a disgusting human figure, and he's found in Judges chapter 11. The two things we know about Japheth is, one, that he ran and lived with worthless men, and you are who you hang out with, so he was a worthless man.

The worst of the worst. He had no control over his zeal, and he made crazy rash vows. Vows.

If you don't know who Japheth is, this is the man who vowed that if God would give him victory, whatever came out of his door when he got home, he would sacrifice. And as he arrives home, what runs out the door? His daughter. Part of me is like, what do you expect to run out of your house when you get home? Anyway, he didn't have cows, Bill.

To me, Japheth was a fool's fool. But all the four of these men, that as I would look at and count as a worthless individuals that I would want nothing in common with, God took these men and he used them. Scratch your head, it's okay, I did for a long time.

He used these men to bring salvation to the nation when they needed it most. And I'm not exactly sure why, but I have been spending a lot of time reminiscing about the transition here, and maybe it's to the fact that we're, in my mind, involved in another transition and that we are looking to build, and there's lots of things going on, lots of moving parts for me, and so I've been just thinking back. And, you know, three years ago, we were preparing to become the senior leaders here.

And I remember, my wife can testify to this, the week before, the Monday through the Saturday before the day of the transition, I was, I was not very nice to live with. You could say, people are looking at her. I, this is true, I was, I was a beast, a bear, I was, and all it was for me was there was mental struggles going on, you know, because in my own mind, I was coming to grips with all of the character flaws of these men that I see in myself, fighting, doubting, am I supposed to do this, should I do this, is this what I'm supposed to do? I was afraid of taking on the mantle of being a leader.

I had very little confidence in myself and wanted to cower away from all the responsibility and the burdens that come with pastoring a church. I was ruled by my emotions, thinking, I don't want to do this, and running and be like, no, it's gonna be good. I was a basket case.

I had outbursts of anger, or I had long periods of intense silence, not speaking to anybody, and in a way, all of these things are common to us as we live life. We all experience these things in different seasons, and it was not long after, I was actually a little bit during that week that I, as I was wrestling with all of these thoughts and wrestling with these things, I was led to a passage in 1st Samuel that really gave me comfort, I guess, and comfort might be the wrong word. I think I, this is one of those things, don't follow me in as an example, okay? I think it was one of those things, I was like, Lord, you better do this, because if not, we're in a lot of trouble, me and you, you know, so I began to pray this scripture that says, it's talking about King Saul when Samuel had anointed him as king, and it says, so it was when he had turned his back to go from Samuel that God gave, and he's talking about Saul, gave him another heart, and all those signs came to pass that day.

See, if you read the context in Samuel chapter 10, Saul is giving every excuse he can to be like, no, this is not the calling that I have, I'm not gonna be the king, you've got the wrong man, I'm a farmer, I'm a simple man, not me. But eventually he agrees to be obedient to the call of the Lord, and it says that as he turned and walked away, God began, God gave him another heart, and I remember in my prayer closet saying, Lord, if you don't give me another heart, this is gonna crash amazingly very fast, because there was no confidence in myself to do what God was asking us, asking me to do, asking my family to do. But what a beautiful picture of faith, because every one of these men were in those same shoes, wrestling with those same character flaws, still having the call of God pressed upon their life, and God expecting them to be obedient to what He was asking of them.

The wind is kicking out there. See, the beautiful thing about faith is it comes to us where we are in our present struggles. It doesn't wait for us to get to that level of perfection where God says, finally, I can use you.

That's not how God works. God takes us from where we are, and He begins to work in us and move us to accomplish the task that He's given us, and so He takes these four men who are just undesirable in every way, but He begins to use them to do great and mighty things in the nation of Israel. David is not, well, he's better, but he still has his flaws as well.

Samuel would probably be the top man mentioned in this list. I don't know that I could find anything wrong with Samuel, but I'm sure he had his flaws as well. See, God can overcome even the worst parts of us as we put our faith in Him.

See, He is all-powerful. He can change that which is inside of us to make us into who He wants us to be, and that's really a promise that He gives us. See, now, with these men in mind, including everyone else that's in chapter 11, and you can write your name in there as well.

By faith, put your name in there, Will Parsons. You can begin to write your story of what God would want from you. What is God calling you to do? And I want you to have that in the back of your mind as we begin to explore the rest of the scriptures here in chapter 11, because we're going to take several chunks here in chapter 11, starting in verse 33.

It says, "...who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 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, and women received their dead, raised to life." What a beautiful passage of faith, and what faith can do through ordinary men and women who put their trust in Him. See, through faith, people can be inspired to heroism, and I don't mean that they sought fame and privilege. They didn't want it for themselves, but in a moment of great suffering and trial for them in their context, they responded to the call of God, sometimes reluctantly, and brought salvation to the nation of Israel.

So the premise of the thought is that unimportant people like Gideon, a man hiding in a winepress, threshing out some wheat because he was afraid, of the Midians, says, I can't do that because I'm the youngest member of the smallest tribe of the weakest clan. I'm not your guy. Pick someone else.

And he goes out with 300 men and defeats the army. The likes of Samson, a womanizing, whining man-child who's ultimately given the strength to cripple the Philistine nation. Samuel, the best of the best, a child given up to the temple at an early age, raised by less than stellar priest to work righteousness all the days of his life.

We think of the heroes like Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, slaves. They were captive in their land. Daniel thrown into the lion's den because he dared pray and then is rescued and given senior leadership in the nation.

All of these examples came from weakness and were made strong by the spirit of God. They were valiant in battle. They destroyed whole armies and even raised the dead.

Nobody special, insignificant people. See, heroes to those whom they helped, but yet were ordinary men and women who responded in obedience to God's calling. See, the one that impacts us today, just like it impacts the Old Testament believers, is Joseph and Mary, two people who absolutely scream insignificance in the day and age they live, are visited and asked to raise Jesus as their child, and they agree.

And that one simple decision of obedience has impacted not only us, but it has impacted every Old Testament saint, everyone who's called on the name of God from beginning of creation to now. Insignificant people willing to be obedient to what God is asking them to do, changing the world around them. So you might say, yeah, well, I can't change nations.

Really? Maybe you can't change a nation. Maybe you're not in that position, but you know what you can do? You can be the hands and feet of Jesus to those whom you meet. You can be a hero to someone who needs a friend, someone who needs help in their most desperate hour, someone who needs just a cup of water and someone to sit with them for just a moment and let them have a moment of peace.

To visit those who are in prison, to spend time getting to know them and sharing about Jesus Christ, you can change a life for eternity. And in that regard, you become a hero that has changed more than a nation. You've changed an eternal destiny for someone.

That's something you and I are given the ability to experience through faith. When we choose to be obedient to what God is asking of us in the moment. What's interesting, our examples here were asked to do great things, change nations, fight armies, all of these things.

And they struggled. And we look at that and be like, oh, why would you? Why would you? Gideon, why would you need the fleece? Question seven times to listen to an angel. And he was supposed to go against an army of people who wanted to kill him.

But yet you and I will be in Walmart and God says, tell that man I love them. It's the same battle. It's the same God asking you to be obedient.

It's the same struggle they had with being asked to go kill armies. And we look at them funny for for fighting God. But yet you and I do the same.

On much smaller arenas that God has given us. So you. Are called to be the hero for someone.

Wherever you find them, wherever you see them struggling, wherever you see that God is asking you to give a helping hand, to be the man or the woman who can step into the gap and fulfill the calling of God in that moment. And it might just be a cup of water. It might be a meeting at the coffee house and having a cup of coffee.

See, that is available to you and I through faith. If we choose to be obedient to the calling of God. We get to move not just nations, but the eternal destiny of people that God puts us in path of.

What an amazing calling to have. But there's another side of faith that's not so pleasant. The writer goes on in Hebrews to talk about this in verse thirty five.

He says, others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still, others had the trial of mockings and scourgings and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned.

And I'm not talking about the drug kind. I'm talking about with rocks. They were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword.

They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted. And I lost my place, sorry, and tormented of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in the desert, in the mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

This is the side of faith we'd rather we'd rather not talk about. I believe Brother Bill shared it last week in Faith Journeys. Salvation is free, but it costs you everything.

The cost. Of faith is everything to faith in Jesus. That simple act of placing your faith in Jesus makes you an enemy of the world.

And it is sickening, the level of cruelty that humans can dole out on other people. Especially if you look at it in history, it has no limits. And it's interesting that it has bared its teeth most consistently on the men and women of faith.

Now, I don't know if you've ever read Fox's Book of Martyrs. It's quite a fascinating read about the different heroes of faith where there were Christians who were tortured and stoned and burned and killed and sawn in half and boiled in oil and tarred and feathered and. All of these atrocious crimes.

All to get them to recant their faith in Jesus Christ. All the pain will stop if you just deny Jesus. But they chose a better resurrection through Jesus Christ.

Aren't you glad we don't live back then? I am. Do you want to know something interesting? In the last hundred years, more women, more men and women of the faith have been martyred than the previous 1900 years of church history combined. It's not getting easier for the Christian.

Persecution is still very much a part of the walk of faith for many people who put their faith in Jesus Christ. And we have it a little bit easier here in America. The most people in the world, but that doesn't exempt us.

Because Christians are hated by the world. Jesus teaches us in John, if the world hates you, remember it hated me first. Paul tells Timothy, in fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Jesus Christ might be persecuted.

Oh, well, well, oh, good catch. Jesus even says in the Beatitudes, blessed are those who are persecuted, just like. For the hero side, it's through faith that gives us the ability to step up to the plate and become the hero for someone.

The same faith gives us the opportunity in times of persecution to step up and be a man or a woman of faith and choose not to deny our savior, Jesus Christ. And what this does is it becomes our testimony. See, through faith, we build our testimony.

Our testimony isn't just some, oh, yeah, I said a prayer and accepted Jesus in my heart. I mean, that's great. We need to do that.

But you build your testimony as you begin to walk out your faith, as you begin to be obedient to Christ and you have things push against you and you don't wilt in light of that pressure. See, the story of our testimony is from where we've come to where we are today. But it also includes where we're going tomorrow.

Because it's the faith that we have walked in that has got us from the point we started to where we are today, but it's that very same faith that's going to take you from today till you enter the kingdom of heaven, whether you're a hero, whether you're stoned. Whether you're cussed. Whether you're sawn in half.

It's faith that gets you to the other side. And it's interesting, because I believe most of us. Have known people who started out in the faith.

Suffered a little bit of persecution. And I said, you know what? No, thanks. I'd rather not.

However, in the same vein of thought, we know many people who have gone through some very difficult, dark seasons. Where faith had to have been a struggle to keep. But yet God has brought them through it.

And because of that struggle, their faith is stronger and greater. And not only that, it gives them a platform from whence to minister to other people. And that's the irony of faith, isn't it? Those who suffer the greatest persecution and maintain their faith in God are the ones who become the heroes for those who are struggling.

In their toughest season of life. Dare I say God allows us sometimes these struggles. So that, yes, our faith could be strengthened.

But more so than that, that we can be a hero to someone who needs strengthening in the time of need. I'd be hard pressed to argue against that through scripture. And that is truly how we obtain a good testimony.

It's not only going through it, but it's in turn reaching back and helping others go through it as well. I want to close chapter 11 using the last two verses. Verse 39 and 40 says, And all of these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise.

God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. I want to read one more Matthew Henry quote. I think I have it up on the thing.

It might all be there. I read this as I was studying this week, and it impacted me quite a bit. It says, And faith will enable a man to serve God and his generation in whatever way he may be employed.

God has called you to serve your generation in whichever way he's asked of you. And how do you do that? You can just leave it up there. I'm going to come back to it.

How do you do that? As you go through persecution, you maintain your faith, and you become employed to God's service to serve your generation. However, God leads you to do it. He goes on to say, The interest and the powers of kings and kingdoms are often opposed to God and its people.

You will always find opposition to your faith. And this is the statement that really struck me. He goes on to say, It is a greater honor and happiness to work righteousness.

That word work means to live, to be, to do. It is a greater honor and happiness to work righteousness than to work miracles. See, by faith, we have comfort of the promises.

By faith, we are prepared to wait for the promises. And in due time, we will receive them. See, all of these heroes died not receiving the promises because the writer says God had something better for them.

That was Jesus Christ. But it says that they served their generation just as you and I serve our generation. And we're always going to find opposition.

But God is calling us to live righteous lives daily and prefers that over working miracles. That's a heavy thought. So much of the church today is we need miracles, we need miracles, we need miracles, we need miracles.

Jesus told the Pharisees, wicked and perverse generation always asking for a sign. The church today seems to always be looking for the miracle. And I believe God is up there scratching his head.

Could you just live one day righteous for me? Could you just live one week righteous for me? Could you just turn over the sin to me and quit living in the filth of the world and just maintain a little bit of righteousness in your life? I was talking with Brother Charlie before service and we were talking about it and he made the point. Everyone wants miracles, but miracles will only follow righteous living. Miracles follow righteous living.

How many times in our own life I remember the first one in my life, great name, famous preacher, miracles everywhere. I was in Louisiana, not very far from Jimmy Swaggart's church. First one that I remember.

All of these great things from the pulpit, miracles, prophecies, blah, blah, blah. Visiting the brothels every night, cheating on his wife, living in sin. And we could list names from now to the next hour to catch up from that point to now.

Of all these great people who give great prophecies, who have great ministries, do great miracles, only to find out years later couldn't live a righteous hour in their life if they had to because of the sin. In their life, and we all sin, guys, but these were people who were purposely willfully living sin. God wants people who will work righteousness more than he wants people who will work miracles.

If we've learned nothing else from this chapter, by faith, you and I must learn to live righteous lives if we want to impact the world we live in. They're watching. They want to know.

They're looking. They want any hint of deception or lie or falsehood. And if they can find it in your life, to the degree that we have a hero to change, a soul for eternity to the good, we also have that to turn it to the negative.

It's about living your life daily to Jesus Christ. Taking up your cross daily, dying daily, sacrificing me daily so that I can maintain my faith in Jesus Christ. And get it.

I get it. It only happens through the Lord, through the power of the Spirit living in us. I understand all that.

But yet you and I have responsibility to make choices to live holy lives. Scripture, Jesus says, be holy as I am holy. It doesn't say trust me to make you holy like I'm holy.

It says be holy. Make choices. Do things that cause holiness to come in your life and then trust God with the results thereafter.

If you and I want to walk by faith and accomplish the things that these heroes did, you have to live the life that you say you believe. Stand with me this morning. Over the last couple of months, we've covered some amazing passages in chapter 11.

And I know that several of you have been ready to get out of chapter 11 and are excited about it. But I truly feel that God wanted to teach us something from this chapter about living a life of faith. Because it's more than just showing up here on Sunday morning and saying, now I lay me down to sleep every night.

It's about purposely choosing to walk out your faith in a world that needs to see the Jesus you say you serve. Faith is about obedience. It's about obedience to God's Word.

So as we wrap up chapter 11, I want to encourage you. But I actually feel like I need to warn you. Because it's almost as if we're jumping out of the pot and into the fire.

Because chapter 12 is no cakewalk. I hope you read chapter 12 this week. And I'm going to leave this week and I'm going to leave you with this question.

As kids, how did you learn to obey your parents? Well, that's what chapter 12 is all about. Because I can assure you it didn't come naturally. Mine came through the leather of my father's belt, specifically and purposely applied to a very created portion of me that needed it.

And that is your introduction to chapter 12. Amen. Amen.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word this morning. Father, I thank you that you've allowed us to be able to look at what it means to live a life of faith through some of the greatest heroes that you've given us in the Old Testament.

Men and women who were not perfect. Men and women who did not have it all together. But one thing that we share in common with them is that they had a love for you.

They had a love for your son. And through that, you were able to take them and to make them heroes and subdue nations to change lives, to lead people to an eternal destination in your kingdom. But the flip side of that, most of them did it by living through persecution.

And while you give us opportunity to be heroes of the faith, we typically arrive there through struggling, through persecution because of our faith. So, Father, even as we go out into this world and we face the persecution of people who hate us, not for only being, for only having faith in you, Lord, help us to choose to live righteously in the world. Help us to earn that hate, if you will.

Not because of our anger and our ruthlessness, but because of our love for each other and our love for you. That that would cause such a desire to know why we're different. And that would ultimately lead to being able to share about your son Jesus and the salvation that he offers.

Because that's truly the gift of walking by faith, is to be able to share it with a lost and dying world. Give us that ability. Equip us to make us ministers in the worlds that we live in for your kingdom.

In Jesus' name, Amen.