

Day 229, Hebrews 11

by David Servant

David Servant's sermon on Hebrews 11 emphasizes the importance of faith through the examples of Old Testament figures who persevered despite challenges.

Scripture: Hebrews 11:4-37

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Perseverance Through Trials"

Description

David Servant preaches on the importance of faith as demonstrated by Old Testament characters in Hebrews 11, highlighting how their unwavering trust in God led to their ultimate reward. The sermon emphasizes the need for believers to imitate the faith of those who came before them, even in the face of persecution and trials, as a way to encourage and strengthen their own faith journey.

Transcript

Only after reading the first 10 chapters of Hebrews are we properly prepared to read Hebrews 11. Now we understand its important context. The author's intent was to encourage persecuted Jewish believers, who were being tempted to waver, to imitate the example of familiar Old Testament characters who held fast in their faith and were ultimately rewarded.

We learn today something that the Old Testament does not reveal: God accepted Abel's animal sacrifice because of his faith (11:4). Abel had a basis for his faith, namely, God's clothing of Adam and Eve with animal skins after their sin. Cain, on the other hand, had no basis to believe that God would accept his offering of "the fruit of the ground," and he represents the one who comes to God on the basis of dead works that do not stem from faith.

Noah acted in faith, trusting that God would keep His promise to flood the earth, and he was saved from God's wrath (11:7), serving as an example to the readers of Hebrews. Like Noah, believers are now safely in God's ark, Jesus, as judgment is about to fall on the earth again.

Abraham and Sarah trusted God to give them an inheritance in a land where they lived as aliens. The Hebrew believers could relate, living as aliens on the earth, believing that they would one day inherit it from God.

Many of the "faith heroes" mentioned all "died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance" (11:13). That is, they had some foresight of the

promised blessings of the gospel, insight that was tragically being missed by unbelieving Jews. It seems those ancient saints must have had more knowledge of the future plan of God than we might suppose from reading the Old Testament. Abraham, for example, "was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (11:10). He knew about the New Jerusalem which is described to us in the book of Revelation (see also Heb. 13:14). We're looking forward to that same city.

Abraham's faith was tested, as was the faith of the Hebrew believers. He believed that God was able to resurrect his son from the dead, just as the author's readers were required to believe that God resurrected His Son from the dead (11:17-19).

The life of Moses was also exemplary to Jewish believers. He decided to follow God, even though it meant denying himself worldly stature and pleasures. He paid a high price, but his faith was rewarded (11:24-28).

It took faith for all the children of Israel to keep the first Passover, sacrificing lambs and sprinkling the blood over their doors (11:28). What seemed completely foolish to the Egyptians paid off for the Israelites when the destroying angel killed all the firstborn who weren't "under the blood." Their faith in the blood saved them, just as our faith in the blood of the Lamb of God saves us.

It took faith to circle Jericho silently for seven days within earshot of the mocking Jerichoites, but those walls came tumblin' down (11:30).

Rahab, the harlot, found that salvation comes by faith, as she and her family were the only inhabitants of Jericho to survive the Israelite onslaught. She trusted the spies' "gospel" and acted accordingly, tying a scarlet thread in her window, which some say is a symbol of Jesus' blood flowing down His cross (11:31).

And there are many more excellent Old Testament examples of those who persevered in faith and whom God rewarded. It was Daniel, of course, who "shut the mouths of lions" by his faith (11:33). His three friends "quenched the power of fire" (11:34). The widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17-24) and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:17-35) "received back their dead by resurrection" (11:35).

Tradition says that it was Isaiah who was sawn in half for his faith (11:37). Jeremiah was imprisoned for his, and Zechariah was stoned. This is good to remember in an age when faith is often being promoted as a means to wealth, success and victory. The truth is, faith generally precipitates suffering, but it always ends in blessing. God is a rewarder of those who seek Him (11:6).

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