

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
May 25, 2014
Hebrews 11:30-40
“The Many Faces of Faith”

Memory Verse

“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.” Hebrews 11:39, NIV

The Big Idea:

Sermon Topic: *Learning to Trust Jesus: Part 5 – Examples of the Faith: The Many Faces of Faith*

Sunday School Scripture: Hebrews 11:30-40

Sunday School Title: “The Many Faces of Faith”

ESS: When the circumstances are difficult and the fruits of your labor and the rewards of your faith seem far off, remember that Jesus IS our reward.

Last week, we studied the faith of Moses and his parents. What did you learn from the Sunday School lesson and sermon last week? This week, we’ll take a quick look at many other men and women of faith from the Old Testament.

The last few weeks, we’ve been studying Hebrews 11, which is kind of a Faith Hall of Fame. If you could create a hall of fame for the faithful, what characteristics would you look for in the people you recognized?

The last few verses of Hebrews 11 mention many men in just a few verses. Let’s see how many of these faithful men we recognize.

READ Hebrews 11:30-40

ACTIVITY: See the quiz “Prophets and Priests of the Old Testament.” Try to answer without looking at the answers!

ANSWER KEY: 1)G 2)D 3)H 4)C 5)J 6)K 7)E 8)L 9)F 10)B 11)I 12)A

Hebrews 11:30-40 mentions many faithful Old Testament men and women. What can we learn from their faith?

1. FAITH ENABLES YOU TO DO GREAT THINGS

As we’ve been reminded by the list of people and deeds from Hebrews 11, faith enables us to accomplish great things. God’s power is available to us. It is faith that activates that power.

READ Matt 17:14-21

Why were the disciples unable to cast out the demon and heal the boy? (v.20)

What did Jesus say was possible with faith? (v.21)

Jesus tells his disciples that nothing is impossible for those who have faith. Faith activates the power of God, enabling us to accomplish great things for his kingdom. By faith, the men and women of the Old Testament won battles, faced lions, escaped death, raised the dead, and much more. The Bible is full of instances in which God accomplished great things through people who had faith.

What about in your life? What has God accomplished through you and your faith?

What about in your life? What has God accomplished through you and your faith? Some of us might have trouble thinking of an example. And honestly, how often do we truly walk by faith? Many of us walk by sight more often than we walk by faith. We attempt only what we are capable of doing within our own strength and resources. But

when this is true, the results are only ordinary. If we want to be a part of something extraordinary, we must rely on an extraordinary God! When we attempt human-sized tasks with human resources, we will achieve human-sized results. On the other hand, when we attempt God-sized tasks relying on God's resources, we will achieve God-sized results! I don't know about you, but I would love to be a part of something so amazing and BIG that the watching world can only explain it by saying "Wow! That must be a God thing!" God is calling us to participate in some God-sized tasks, but this requires faith.

When we turn down the opportunity to be a part of a God-sized tasks, what does this say about our faith? What are we saying about the God we believe in?

What God-sized tasks might God be calling you to participate in? What God-sized tasks might God be calling our church to participate in?

2. FAITH CALLS YOU TO ENDURE DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

In Hebrews 11:35-38, we see that many men and women of faith had to endure difficult circumstances *because of their faith*. The Scripture says believers in the past have been humiliated, tortured, imprisoned, beaten, stoned, and killed, all because of their faith. Even today in countries across our world, believers are meeting in secret while others are being punished for professing Christ. Faith doesn't always lead down easy roads to rosy destinations.

Have you ever had to endure something difficult because of your faith?

There is a popular teaching today that promises health, wealth, and prosperity to those who have strong faith in God. This simply isn't Biblical! Jesus himself experienced hardship while on Earth, and he promised his followers would, too. In one of his final moments with his disciples, Jesus tells them "in this world you *will have trouble*" (Jn 16:33). Jesus was warning them that their faith might call them to endure difficult circumstances.

So the question is not *whether or not* the faithful will experience hardship or endure trails. They undoubtedly will! Instead, the question is *how* will the faithful experience hardship and endure trials. Will they go through hardship and trails with full faith in God, trusting Him in the valley? Or will they abandon their faith and rely on human effort? When the sky grows dark and the storms come for the believer, how will he react?

READ Habakkuk 3:17-19

Even though the prophet Habakkuk knows the Lord is sending the Babylonians to punish Judah, destroy their land, and capture their people, Habakkuk still trusts in the Lord. His faith is so strong that, even in the face of coming danger and destruction, he is able to still praise God. Habakkuk knew that, despite the changing and challenging circumstances of life, God remains the same and is still worthy of our full trust. Is this true in our lives? Is our faith in God so strong that even the worst storms of life cannot shake us?

3. FAITH'S REWARD MAY BE DELAYED

It's difficult to admit that faith may require us to be uncomfortable (at the least) or even mistreated or persecuted (at the worst). But the story doesn't end there. Hebrews 11:39 says these faithful men and women of the Old Testament "were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised." Even though they lived lives of faith, they died before seeing God's ultimate promise and reward come true. All of these Old Testament people died before Jesus, the promised Messiah, came to live and die for us. So the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise and their reward were delayed. Sometimes that happens in the economy of faith. Things earned and promised aren't always immediately available. Sometimes it takes time for us to see the fruits of our faith. Sometimes it may even take more than our lifetime. But we can be sure that the one who has promised will prove faithful, in His own timing.

And, when the fruit or reward of our faith is slow in coming, we can rest confidently in Jesus, who *IS* our reward. Earlier, we looked at Jesus' warning to his disciples about trouble. Let's read that verse again, but this time in it's entirety.

READ John 16:33

After warning them of the inevitable, Jesus gives a promise: "Take heart! I have overcome the world!" For the disciples and for us, our encouragement and reward for our faith is Jesus, Himself. He has overcome all world and all its evil. He has conquered death and will one day conquer Satan! One day the end will come, and we already know the outcome! We're on the winning team! Jesus will have the victory, and we will live victoriously with Him in Heaven. But until then, we can spend every day living abundantly through the personal relationship we have with the God of the Universe. The living, breathing, Word of God, who came to earth and died for us, pursues us daily. He loves us with an everlasting love, and He desires for us to delight in Him.

CONCLUSION: When the circumstances are difficult and the fruits of your labor and the rewards of your faith seem far off, remember that Jesus IS our reward.

APPLY:

Do you see Jesus as a reward, or as an obligation?

If Jesus IS your reward, are you enjoying Him daily?

In what practical ways can you focus more on delighting in Jesus as the reward of your faith?

STUDY NOTES:

(These are for your personal study. This is NOT the lesson.)

Study Guide by David Guzik, 2001. Available online: www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down: At Jericho, the people of Israel had a *daring* faith. There was no turning back, having already crossed the river Jordan at flood stage, which cut off any line of retreat. At Jericho, the people of Israel had an *obedient* faith. They did not really understand what God was doing, yet they obeyed nonetheless.

After they were encircled for seven days: At Jericho, the people of Israel had a *patient* faith. The walls did not fall down for the first six days, yet they kept marching as God commanded. At Jericho, the people of Israel had an *anticipating* faith. They knew God would act on the seventh day when they shouted.

By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish: **Rahab** (Joshua 2) might seem an unusual example of faith, but her trust in God and willingness to identify with His people, no matter what the cost, is worthy of praise.

When she had received the spies with peace: When the Hebrew spies came to Rahab, she declared *He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath* (Joshua 2:11). This was proof of her faith. It was not strong faith, it was not perfect faith, but her faith was commendable nonetheless. Clement of Rome, the earliest Christian writer outside of the Bible, was the first to see a symbol of the blood of Jesus in the scarlet cord which Rahab hung outside her window.

Gideon was a man who boldly destroyed idols, and was mightily used of God to defeat a much larger army of Midianites (Judges 6-7). Yet he was also a man who doubted God's word to him at first, and repeatedly asked for confirmation.

Barak led the people of Israel in a dramatic victory over the Canaanites (Judges 4). Yet he hesitated and went forward only when Deborah encouraged him.

Samson was used mightily of the Lord to defeat the Philistines. Yet he never lived up to his potential, and had a tragic ending to his life after being enticed by Delilah (Judges 13-16).

Jephthah was used of God to defeat the Ammonites. Yet Jephthah made a foolish vow and stubbornly kept it (Judges 11).

David was a remarkable man of faith. Yet he also failed with Bathsheba and with his own children.

Each one of these were men of faith, yet had notable areas of failure in their life. Still, Hebrews 11 commends their faith, and lists them in the "Hall of Faith." This shows that weak faith is better than unbelief, and you don't have to be perfect to make it into God's "Hall of Faith."

Some of those who **subdued kingdoms:** David, Joshua, King Asa, Jehoshaphat, King Hezekiah, King Josiah.

Some of those who **worked righteousness:** Elijah, Elisha, and all the prophets of God, and King Josiah also.

Some of those who **obtained promises**: Caleb, Gideon, Barak.

Some of those who **stopped the mouths of lions**: Daniel, David, and Benaiah (one of David's mighty men).

Some of those who **quenched the violence of fire**: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Some of those who **escaped the edge of the sword**: David escaped both the swords of Goliath and Saul, Moses escaped the sword of Pharaoh, and Elijah escaped the sword of Jezebel.

Some of those who **out of weakness were made strong**: Sarah, Gideon, Abraham, Esther, and King Hezekiah.

Some of those who **became valiant in battle**: David, King Asa, and Jehoshaphat.

Some of those **women who received their dead raised to life again**: The widow of Zarepheth, and the Shunamite.

Tortured in the ancient Greek language has the idea "to beat with a stick or a baton."

A better resurrection: As Jesus said in John 5:29, there is a resurrection unto life, and a resurrection unto condemnation. These worthies received the **better resurrection**.

Trial of mockings: Isaac endured the cruel mocking of Ishmael, and Samson was mocked at the feast of the Philistines.

Chains and imprisonments: Joseph was cast into prison for his faith, and the evil King Ahab imprisoned the prophet Micaiah.

They were stoned: Zechariah was stoned to death between the altar and the temple, and Naboth was stoned to death by Jezebel's henchmen.

Sawn in two: According to reliable tradition, Isaiah was sawn in two and killed.

Were tempted: How does being **tempted** compare with these other persecutions? Some have thought the text was corrupted here, and the writer to the Hebrews originally wrote "branded" or "burnt alive" or "mutilated" or "strangled." But for those who have known the pains of temptation, it is not unreasonable to think that the writer to the Hebrews regards overcoming temptation as a true triumph of faith.

Were slain with the sword: Such as the eighty-five priests murdered by Doeg, or the prophets murdered in Elijah's day.

Wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins: Such as Elijah, who wore this kind humble clothing and did not mind the humility or the discomfort.

Of whom the world was not worthy: The world is not necessarily friendly to people of faith, and the world isn't necessarily **worthy** of them either! "The despised and ill-treated group of servants of God was of greater real worth than all the rest of humanity put together." (Morris)

In dens and caves of the earth: David, Elijah, and prophets under the leadership of Obadiah were all forced to flee and hide in caves.

Even though they **obtained a good testimony through faith**, they never saw the promise in the same way that we do on this side of the cross. They **did not receive the promise**, the testimony of the completed work of the Messiah on their behalf.

God having provided something better for us: We have been **provided something better** (seeing and enjoying the completed work of Jesus on our behalf) have *much more reason* to hold on to faith, and to not let discouragement and tough times defeat us.

They should not be made perfect apart from us: The idea of **perfect** is "complete." They could not be made complete until the work of Jesus; they looked forward to Jesus and His work, we look at it from behind - and enjoy the fruits of His work!