



eLesson# 001

Text: Hebrews 11:1-12:13

Subject: Faith

Heroic Faith

We love stories of the super-Christians ... missionaries, martyrs, leaders, saints, or better yet, the Biblical heroes of faith. But they make us wonder. Maybe we even feel convicted by their examples. What made them different? Why do their lives stand out from the multitude of other believers? What did they have that so many other Christians do not? Actually, the answer is simple. The answer is faith. It is a faith beyond saving faith. It is a living, daily faith ... an heroic faith. God's review of the heroes of faith is in Hebrews 11. However, these men and women were not superhuman. They were just normal men and women of extraordinary faith.

Faith is the assurance, confidence, knowledge and substance of what we hope, wait, and long for in life, 11:1-6. We look at our world and know there must be something better. Faith turns the dissatisfaction and hopelessness of today into the satisfying hope of eternity. Faith gives us spiritual eyes ... making the invisible visible. Actually, without faith we cannot please God. To please Him we must, in faith, be thoroughly convinced that He exists. The knowledge of the authenticity of God must dominate our being. And we must be convinced that He will reward us in eternity if we strive hard after Him now. Our rewards come not in the war but afterwards when we go home to be with our King. Only that kind of faith will satisfy God. Then God will not be ashamed to be called our God, 11:16. That kind of faith is not dependent on circumstances ... as seen in the waiters, the winners, and the wiped out of Hebrews 11.

The waiters had the greatest challenge, 11:7-27. They heard the promises but did not see fulfillment for many years. Abraham and Sarah waited beyond human possibilities to receive God's promised heir Isaac. Then, in faith, Abraham was willing to sacrifice their miracle child at God's command. What were their secrets to faith? He and Sarah were never at home on this earth. They lived here as aliens, strangers, and exiles. And they never looked back. They looked forward through the eyes of faith to God's city ... to their

heavenly home ... to their eternal rewards. And what about Moses? He waited until he was eighty to lead the people out of bondage. How could his faith last so long? Moses' faith is defined as putting righteous reproach above worldly riches ... enduring ... and with eyes of faith seeing Him who is unseen, 11:26-27. Other great examples of faith waiters are found in Hebrews 11. But what about you? Have you waited for days, weeks, or even months? Are you becoming impatient? Are you growing weary of waiting many days? Then I would suggest that when you walk the streets of gold that you do not tell your story to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, or Moses. They would not be inspired by a short wait of a few days, weeks, or months. It would be as if you were telling Noah about the time your bathtub overflowed. Do not tell them. However, if you have faithfully waited many years ... seek them out in the Kingdom ... I am sure you all could joyfully share stories of faith and God's faithfulness.

The winners are possibly easiest to understand, 11:27-35a. They saw active, victorious examples of fulfilled promises. Moses led the people out of Egypt and through the Red Sea. I would love to see that ... I hope there are highlight films in Heaven. Joshua and his troops saw the walls come down at Jericho. That seventh march on the seventh day must have been filled with great expectations ... and followed by wonderful exhilaration. And others conquered kingdoms, performed miracles, and escaped lions, fire, swords, and even death. Wouldn't we all love that kind of life? Or would we? Moments of winning are just that ... they are just moments. The reality of even these lives was the tedious routine of daily life ... only occasionally accented by the miraculous. Did those victorious moments make the daily grind even more tedious? Is faithfulness in the midst of the mundane more difficult after the victory lap?

The wiped out are the most convicting, 11:35b-38, ... tortured, ridiculed, beaten, bound, imprisoned, stoned to death, cut in two, tempted, executed, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, and wandering without the comforts of earthly homes. Today so many say that if we have enough faith we will be successful, healthy, wealthy, and comfortable. Should someone have told that to these wiped out men and women of Hebrews 11? If they could ... would they go back and change their earthly circumstances? No! God's testimony was that they were men and women "of whom the world was not worthy" 11:38. They were humanly wiped out. But their faith put them in God's hall of fame. How do you and I handle the struggles in our lives? Are we faithful when wiped out? Are we faithful when winning? ... or after winning? Are we faithful when waiting?

Application should always follow knowledge. We need to live this kind of heroic Hebrews 11 faith. We must realize that in eternity we will never regret our earthly circumstances, trials, and tragedies. But we will regret our sin and faithlessness. We do not gain God's approval through human success, wealth and health ... only our true faith does that. Hebrews 12 teaches us that we have the testimony of all these chapter 11 witnesses. So how do we live like these heroes? The answers are in 12:1-3. We must set aside all things, even the good things that stand in the way of Biblical faith. And we must break away from the sin that trips us up and drags us down. We must run with endurance. We must be steadfast until the moment when we are called home. We must keep our eyes on Jesus. Turn away from circumstances and earthly distractions ... and gaze on Him, the author and perfecter of your faith. Look to your rewards. Jesus suffered ... so why shouldn't we? Do not grow weary. Do not throw in the towel. Do not give up. Keep on keeping on. You are God's child. He wants you to be faithful. He loves you. How does He show you His love? He shows you in His perfect discipline, 12:4-13. God's discipline is training. It is not punishment. God strengthens you through discipline. He builds enduring faith in you by letting you wait. He increases your hopeful faith with occasional victories. He gives you deep faith by letting you suffer. His loving discipline will not seem joyful at the moment ... but afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Are you fighting His loving discipline? Or are you being trained by it?

Study Questions

1. What is a good outline of Hebrews 11:1- 12:13?

Hebrews 11:1-6 _____

Hebrews 11:7-27 _____

Hebrews 11:27-35a _____

Hebrews 11:35b-38 _____

Hebrews 12:1-3 _____

Hebrews 12:4-13 _____

2. How would you define faith in your own words?

3. What characteristic describes the waiters, Hebrews 11:7-27?

4. What characteristic describes the winners, Hebrews 11:27-35?

5. What characteristic describes the wiped-out, Hebrews 11:35-38?

6. What does Hebrews 11:39-40 mean?

7. Who are the “great cloud of witnesses” in Hebrews 12:1? A wrong answer is “believers in the grand stands of Heaven”.

8. How can someone be more faithful, Hebrews 12:1-3?

9. How do faith and God’s discipline fit together?

10. When you get to Heaven, what would you like to ask Noah? ... Abraham and Sarah? ... Moses? ... and those who were sawn in two?

Personal Reflection

1. Which group are you in ... the waiters, the winners, or the wiped-out?

2. How is your faith?

3. Are you sure of what you hope for? Can you see the invisible?
4. Does your response to your circumstances show that you are convinced that God exists?
5. Are you looking to eternity for your reward?
6. Is your faith heroic?
7. How is God disciplining you to be more faithful?
8. What will you do with what you have learned about heroic faith?

Answers to Study Questions

1. What is a good outline of Hebrews 11:1- 12:13?

Hebrews 11:1-6: The Definition of faith

Hebrews 11:7-27: The Waiters

Hebrews 11:27-35a: The Winners

Hebrews 11:23b-38: The Wiped Out

Hebrews 12:1-3: Run the Race with Endurance

Hebrews 12:4-13: Faith and Discipline

2. How would you define faith in your own words? Faith is trusting God in spite of any circumstances ... good or bad.

FAITH = Forsaking All I Trust Him.

3. What characteristic describes the waiters, Hebrews 11:7-27? Faith.

4. What characteristic describes the winners, Hebrews 11:27-35? Faith.

5. What characteristic describes the wiped-out, Hebrews 11:35-38? Faith.

6. What does Hebrews 11:39-40 mean? The total fulfillment of God's promises is yet future and is for all believers together ... from all times.

7. Who are the "great cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews 12:1? A wrong answer is "believers in the grand stands of Heaven". The great cloud of witnesses are the waiters, winners, and wiped out of Hebrews 11 ... those giving testimony to us about the life of faith lived above circumstances.

8. How can someone be more faithful, Hebrews 12:1-3? By laying aside the good and the bad that hinders our following God ... by knowing what course God has put before us and by running it with endurance ... by fixing our eyes on Jesus ... and by remembering what He endured.

9. How do faith and God's discipline fit together? God disciplines (trains) us to have more faith.

10. When you get to Heaven, what would you like to ask Noah? ... Abraham and Sarah? ... Moses? ... and those who were sawn in two? Be creative in answering this question on your own. Think of spiritual questions from what you have learned in this lesson ... but think about simple practical ones too. For example: To Noah ... Were you ever afraid in the storm or were you always faithful? ... What did you learn about God in that yearlong flood? ... How bad did it smell on the ark?

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