

PEOPLE OF FAITH

C. Stephen David | *Ekklesia Evangelical Fellowship* | September 17, 2023

2 Peter 1:12, Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, **though you know them** and are established in the truth that you have. [13] I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder...

We have seen so far—Faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses...

Note: The author is not focusing on the weaknesses of the people of old but only one strength aspect, which is their faith.

Hebrews 11: [20] By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

- The reference is to Gen 27:27–40.
- Jacob deceives his brother Esau and robs his blessings. Jacob received the firstborn blessings and Esau secondary blessings.
- Whatever Isaac blessed, those blessings we see throughout the history of Israel, especially the coming of Messiah through Jacob.

[21] By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

- The reference is to Gen 48:8–20. Jacob blesses Ephraim over Manasseh (firstborn)

Note: Both Isaac and Jacob trusted God to fulfil the promised blessings. [No mention of Abraham blessing Isaac or Ishmael]

[22] By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

- ❖ **Genesis 50:24** And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” 25 Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” 26 So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Note: Joseph trusted God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and by faith spoke about the exodus and his burial.

[23-28]—Already preached about Moses

[29] By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.

- The reference is to Exo 14.
- After the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the army pursued them again.
- Israelites were afraid, grumbled against Moses, and Moses cried out to God and stretched his staff.
- The Lord sent strong wind, divided the Red Sea, made the land dry, the waters stood like a wall, people walked through all night, and the water swept back and drowned all the Egyptians.

Note: It took great faith to walk through the Red Sea; it was a scary thing to walk through with towers of waters on both sides.

Humour:

- **Teacher:** Modern scholarship has shown that the Red Sea in that area was only 10-inches deep at that time. It was no problem for the Israelites to wade across."
- **Student:** "God is greater than I thought! Not only did He lead the whole nation of Israel through the Red Sea, He topped it off by drowning the whole Egyptian army in 10 inches of water!"

[30] By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

- The reference is to Joshua 6.
- Marched around the city once for six days.
- On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times. The priests blew the trumpets, people shouted with a great shout, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the city was captured.

Note: It took great faith to walk around the city and obey God's word.

[31] By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

- The reference is to Joshua 2 [Joshua sent two men to spy Jericho]

- Rahab was a Gentle and prostitute.
- Because she saved the spies, her life was spared and was not killed along with those in Jericho.
- ❖ **Matthew 1:5** and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of David the king.
- ❖ **James 2:25** And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

[32] And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— [33] who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, [34] quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Judges: The Lord used Judges to deliver Israelites from their enemies.

- Gideon [Judges 6-8]—victory over the Midianites [from 32k – 300 men]
- Barak [Judges 4-5]—victory over the Canaanites commander, Sisera
- Samson [Judges 13-16]—victory over the Philistines
- Jephthah [Judges 10-11]—victory over the Ammonites

Early King

- David [1 Samuel 15—2 Samuel 24]

Prophets

- Samuel and the prophets
- Samuel was the first prophet and the prophets down through the Malachi.

[33] who [previously mentioned] through faith [nine feats]

- **conquered kingdoms**—alludes to Judges and Kings
- **enforced justice**—alludes to Kings.

- **obtained promises**—alludes to Patriarchs, Israelites
- **stopped the mouths of lions**—alludes to Daniel’s deliverance [Dan 6]
- **[34] quenched the power of fire**—alludes to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace. [Daniel 3]
- **escaped the edge of the sword**—alludes to David
- **were made strong out of weakness**—alludes to Samson, Jeremiah, Moses
- **became mighty in war**— alludes to Judges and Kings
- **put foreign armies to flight**—alludes to Judges and Kings

[35] Women received back their dead by resurrection—may refer to the widow of Zarephath whose son God raised through Elijah (1 Kings 17) and to the son of the Shunammite woman whom Elisha raised (2 Kings 4).

In Jewish intertestamental writings one famous story of courageous martyrdom involved the death of a mother and her seven sons (see 2 Maccabees 7:1–42). Many scholars feel that the reference to enduring torture in Hebrews 11:35 has this incident in mind. All eight endured barbarous torture because they refused to disobey God’s laws. One moving incident in the story occurred when the pagan king asked the mother to encourage the last of the seven sons to renounce his faith and eat swine’s flesh. The mother, who had seen six other sons die, said to her son, “Fear not this tormentor, but, being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren.” The son refused to obey the king’s command, and the king treated him with greater rage than all the other sons.¹

Some were tortured, refusing to accept release [by compromising], so that they might rise again to a better life [eschatological resurrection].

- Evokes a graphic impression of suffering without relief. The reference may be to a form of torture in which a person was stretched out on a rack, and then his taut stomach was beaten as one beats a drum, until the muscle-walls collapsed and death occurred from internal injuries.²

¹Max Anders, *Hebrews & James*, eds. Max Anders, vol. 10 of [Holman New Testament Commentary](#). Accordance electronic ed. (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 1999), 205.

²William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, vol. 47B of [Word Biblical Commentary](#). Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 388.

- The ninety-year-old scribe, Eleazar, who refused the pretense of renouncing commitment to God so that he might, “be released from death” (2 Macc 6:22). He willingly chose the rack and endured a brutal beating: “When he was about to die under the blows, he groaned aloud and said: ‘It is clear to the Lord in his holy knowledge that, though I might have been released from death, I am enduring terrible sufferings in my body through this beating, but in my soul I am glad to suffer these things because I fear him’” (2 Macc 6:30; cf 2 Macc. 7:24).³

[36] Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment—Joseph, Jeremiah, Isaiah

- Jeremiah had been beaten and placed in the stocks and complained bitterly that he had been made an object of ridicule and mockery, whose ministry brought only insult and reproach (Jer 20:2, 7–8). On another occasion he had been beaten and imprisoned in a dungeon, where he remained for a lengthy period (Jer 37:15–16, 18–20). When he was subsequently lowered into a mud-filled cistern, he would have starved to death had not a Cushite official of the royal palace secured permission to remove him from the cistern (Jer 38:6–13). In summarizing a long history of abuse, Joshua ben Sira said of Jeremiah, “they had afflicted him” (Sir 49:7).⁴

[37] They were stoned, they were sawn in two— Jewish legends arose concerning the deaths of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah. Jeremiah was said to be stoned and Isaiah was said to be sawn in half.

- Scholars have found a Jewish writing called “The Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah” which gives the gory details of Isaiah’s martyrdom. It narrates that Isaiah withdrew from Jerusalem to avoid the wickedness which ran out of control during the reign of Manasseh. He lived in Bethlehem surrounded by godly prophets until Manasseh’s henchmen seized and falsely accused him. Manasseh’s accusers gave Isaiah a chance to renounce his prophetic warning to the nation, and Isaiah answered, “There is nothing further that you can take except the skin of

³William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, vol. 47B of [Word Biblical Commentary](#). Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 388–389.

⁴William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, vol. 47B of [Word Biblical Commentary](#). Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 389–390.

my body.” With that answer Isaiah’s enemies used a wooden saw to cut him in half. The account adds that he did not cry out or weep, but his mouth spoke with the Holy Spirit until he was sawed in two.⁵

they were killed with the sword— The phrase “put to death by the sword” is reminiscent of Jezebel who killed many of the prophets (1 Kgs 18:4,13; 19:10).

❖ **Matthew 23:35**, Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.

They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— The phrase “sheepskins and goatskins” immediately brings to mind the clothing of Elijah and Elisha (2 Kgs 1:8) and other prophets.

[38] of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Of whom the world was not worthy—the world didn’t deserve to inhabit them.

wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth—Flight from persecution [Elijah and those in intertestamental period]

[39] And all these, though commended through their faith [despite their weaknesses], **did not receive what was promised,**

What was promised that they did not receive? Don’t confuse this singular promise with v.33 “who through faith obtained promises” (particular)

[9:15] Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant [Christ’s death and resurrection], so that those who are called may receive **the promised eternal inheritance.**

[11:13] These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. [14] For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. [15] If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. [16] But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

⁵Max Anders, *Hebrews & James*, eds. Max Anders, vol. 10 of [Holman New Testament Commentary](#). Accordance electronic ed. (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 1999), 212.

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

[40] since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect [glorification]— The Old Testament saints with live eternally together with the New Testament saints in the new creation.

LESSONS TO LEARN FROM THE HEROES OF FAITH:

1. These men faced hardships and challenges in life. Life wasn't easy for them. These men faced different sufferings in life. They all didn't suffer in the same way. LIFE IN GOD IS CHALLENGING.
2. These men had faith in God that He is the Ruler over all things, persevered in their afflictions [despite hardships], and moved ahead to fulfil God's will. NOTHING PLEASES GOD LIKE FAITH [11:6]. NOTHING DISPLEASES GOD LIKE UNBELIEF.
3. These men lived as strangers and exiles on the earth. THEY LOOKED FORWARD TO A BETTER COUNTRY, A HEAVENLY CITY OF GOD. Rejoice for the Old Testament and New Testament saints are going to live together in the new creation. [Gospel/Invitation/Encouragement]

Max Anders (Author, Bible teacher, and Pastor): Just as physical eyesight provides evidence about visible things, faith provides evidence about the invisible. God has promised future blessings and eternal rewards. No one has seen these yet. Still, believers are certain God will deliver on his promises, and we will one day see and experience these blessings and rewards. Faith proves the reality of what we cannot see. **Faith enables Christians to live obediently now in the light of what we know in faith will come.**