

**Old Testament Examples of Saving Faith
Hebrews 11:32-40**

There are only 2 groups of people in this world. There are those, who as an expression of their faith in God and His word, have chosen to live by faith. And then there are those who, lacking faith in God and His word, have chosen not to live by faith.

Those who have chosen to live by faith will be saved. Those who have not chosen to live by faith will not be saved. For it is only those who have chosen to live by faith, as an expression of their faith in God and His word, that God considers righteous. This was true during the Old Testament period, prior to the coming of Christ, and it has continued to be true in the New Testament period, after the coming of Christ.

What did Habakkuk, an Old Testament prophet, declare in **Habakkuk 2:4**? He declared that, "**The righteous man shall live by faith.**" And what did Paul, quoting from Habakkuk, declare in **Romans 1:17** and in **Galatians 3:11**? He declared the same truth, "**The righteous man shall live by faith.**"

So if we want to entertain the thought, that we do in fact have a personal relationship with God and that our personal relationship with Him will one day culminate with us being with Him in glory in that heavenly city that He has prepared for us, how must we now live our lives, based on what I have just said? **We must now, as an expression of our faith in God and His word, be striving to live our lives by faith!!!**

Or in other words, **we must now, as an expression of our faith in God and His word, be striving to submit ourselves to God and His word in all areas of our lives, believing that in doing so that we will be blessed and ultimately rewarded with a place in heaven.**

So will we always be successful in our striving to live our lives in this way? No! But when we are successful what can we expect to happen? **When we, by the grace of God are in fact able to live by faith, the floodgates of God's power will be released in and through us, thus enabling us do the things that God has called us to do and to endure the things that God has called us to endure.** This is what we can expect.

And hopefully what I have just shared with you will come alive for us this morning as we once again return back to our study of the Book of Hebrews. So what have we learned so far?

We have learned that it was written to a group of Hebrew believers, living in Rome, who under a great persecution were actually considering leaving Christ and the gospel of Christ, so that they might return back to Judaism or to some form of it, knowing that if they did so, that they would no longer have to suffer the things that they were suffering, as a result of their identification with Christ and His gospel. So how did the author respond to this threat?

He sought to strengthen their faith. And how did he do that? He emphasized various superiorities of Christ in **Hebrews 1:1-10:18**. And then, based on those superiorities, he proceeded to exhort them in **Hebrews 10:19-25**, to warn them in **Hebrews 10:26-31**, and to encourage them in **Hebrews 10:32-39**.

So how did he encourage them? He encouraged them by declaring to them, that he believed that both he and they did in fact possess genuine faith or in other words that kind of faith that, though tested, will endure. So what did the author do next?

The author after confidently stating that he believed that both he and his readers possessed faith, the author then challenged his readers to live by faith using Old Testament examples (Hebrews 11:1-40).

And where do we see these examples of faith listed for us? We see them in **Hebrews 11:1-40**.

And it is this portion of Hebrews we have been examining. So what have we seen so far?

In **Hebrews 11:1** this author provided a working definition of faith. In **Hebrews 11:2** he made the point, that it was through this kind of faith that he had just defined, that the "**men of old**" had gained approval from God. In **Hebrews 11:3** he then, in essence linked the faith of these men of old, who had gained approval through their faith, to his readers' faith. The author then

began to provide a list of these Old Testament examples of faith. So where did he begin as he began to construct this list?

The author began by highlighting examples of faith from the time period that preceded the **flood** (Hebrews 11:4-7). And who were those examples? They were Abel, Enoch, and Noah. So who were the next Old Testament examples of faith that this author chose to highlight?

The author then highlighted examples of faith from the time period of the **patriarchs** (Hebrews 11:8-22). So who were these examples of faith? They were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. So where did the author go next?

The author after highlighting examples of faith from the time period of the patriarchs then chose to highlight examples of faith from the time period surrounding the **Exodus** (Hebrews 11:23-31). And who were those examples? They were Moses' parents, Moses, the children of Israel, and Rahab the harlot.

And this is where we left off. So after the author highlighted these Old Testament examples of faith, who were the next Old Testament examples of faith that this author chose to highlight as he prepared to bring **Hebrew 11** to its conclusion? And this is the answer:

MESSAGE

The author's final Old Testament examples of faith came from the time period of the judges through the time period of the **kings** (Hebrews 11:32-40). And this brings us to **Hebrews 11:32-40**.

And what is my hope for us this morning as we examine these verses? My hope is this, that as we examine these verses that we will once again be challenged to live our lives by faith, thus confirming not only the fact that we indeed been saved, but also providing us the opportunity to live our lives in the sphere of God's power, where great things can be accomplished and where great difficulties can be endured. This is my hope for this message this morning.

So how did the author begin? The author provided a list of six individuals who were well known to his readers for what they had accomplished and endured by faith (Hebrews 11:32). This is how he began.

So let us now read the very first part of **Hebrews 11:32** and see if this is not so. And what did he say? He said this, "**And what more can I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel.....**"

So did this author begin this section of verses by providing a list of six individuals, who were well known to his readers for what they had accomplished and endured by faith? Yes! This is exactly what he did.

So as we look at this list, in a very general sense, what is one of the first things that we will most certainly notice? It would be this:

The first four individuals who were named on this list were judges. So who were the judges? The judges were local leaders who after the death of Joshua's generation, would periodically be called upon by God to act as deliverers when the children of Israel were being threatened or oppressed.

So out of the 15 judges who served Israel over a period of 350 years after the time period of Joshua's generation, who were the four judges that were chosen to appear on this list? They were Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah.

So were these the only judges who had lived by faith? No, there were other judges who had lived by faith, but these judges would have been the most familiar to the recipients of this letter. So who was the fifth name on the list?

The fifth name on the list was a king. So who were the kings of Israel? The kings of Israel were the ones who replaced the judges of Israel. Who, with their standing armies, became the ones the people of Israel looked to for their protection.

So out of the 41 kings who ruled over Israel, when Israel was united as well as divided, who was the only king that appeared on this list? It was David.

So was David the only king of Israel that had lived by faith? No! There were other kings who had lived by faith but David would have been the king that the recipients of this letter would have been most familiar with, by far. **So who was the sixth name on the list?**

The sixth name on the list was a transitional figure. And who was this transitional figure? It was Samuel. And why would Samuel be considered a transitional figure? He would be considered a transitional figure because Samuel, who was both a judge and prophet, was the one used by God to transition from the time period of the judges to the time period of the kings.

So after the author completed his list of six names, what did the author do next at the end of **verse 32**? The author then added to his list of six names "the prophets" who also would have been well known for what they had accomplished and endured by faith (Hebrews 11:32).

So who are prophets? Prophets act as the spokespersons for God. And in the scriptures there are a lot of them. In fact, there are 133 named prophets in the bible and a whole lot of others who were not named but were referenced in the bible.

So when the author added "the prophets" are we to think that the author was referring to all of the prophets that are referenced in the bible? I don't believe so. Clearly the prophets this author is referring to are Old Testament prophets and most likely only the Old Testament prophets who prophesied subsequent to Samuel during the time of the kings.

So after the author provided this list of people in verse 32 what did the author do next? The author then provided his readers with a summary of all the various things that those he had just mentioned had **accomplished** by faith (Hebrews 11:33-35a).

So what were those things? Let me read for you **Hebrews 11:33-35a**. And what do these verses say? They say this, **"(33) Who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, (34) quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put**

foreign armies to flight. (35) Women received back their dead by resurrection..." Wow! What a list of accomplishments!

And again how were they (or in other words those who had been included on the list in verse 32) able to accomplish all these amazing things? They accomplished all these amazing things **"by faith"!!** Or in other words they accomplished all these amazing things because they, as an expression of faith in God and His word, were willing to submit themselves to God and His word, even though in doing so, placed themselves from time to time into places of extreme difficulty.

So why were they, as an expression of faith in God and His word, willing from time to time to put themselves in a position of such extreme difficulty? They were willing to do this because they believed in God and that God would reward them.

What does **Hebrews 11:6** tell us? **"He who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."**

And what was the ultimate reward that they believed they one day would be receiving for having lived a life of faith? Heaven! This is what they believed would be their ultimate reward for having lived a life of faith. We have already seen this expressed clearly to us in **Hebrews 11:10,16**.

But in addition to this future reward, there was a present reward for those who had accomplished such great things by faith. And what was that present reward? They were able to see and to experience the unleashing of the power of God in the things that they had accomplished and had been called by God to do.

So after listing all these accomplishments what did the author do next?

The author then provided his readers with a summary of all the various things that those he had just mentioned had **endured** by faith (Hebrews 11:35b-38).

So what were those things? Let me now read **Hebrews 11:35b-38**. And what do these verses say? **"(35) ... and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; (36) and**

others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated. (38) men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground." Wow! What a list of sufferings! But even in spite of the extreme nature of these sufferings what did they continue to do by faith! They endured them!!!

And again how were they able to able to endure the extreme nature of all these sufferings they were subjected to? They endured the extreme sufferings "by faith"!! Or in other words, they were willing to endure the extreme nature of all these sufferings because they, as an expression of their faith in God and His word, were willing to submit themselves to God and His word.

So why were they, as an expression of faith in God and His word, willing to do this? Again, they were willing to do this because they believed in God and that God would reward them for their faith or in other words that they would one day be ushered into the presence of God and enjoy the blessedness of His presence forever.

But again, in addition to this future reward, there was also a present reward for those who had endured such great sufferings. And what was that present reward? They were able to see and to experience the power of God in the things that they had suffered and had been called by God to endure.

We have now concluded the summary of the accomplishments that those who were mentioned in **Hebrews 11:32** had accomplished by faith. And we have also now finished the summary of what those, who were mentioned in **Hebrews 11:32**, had endured by faith.

So how will the author conclude this chapter which has presented all of these Old Testament examples who had accomplished and endured so much by faith?

The author concluded the chapter by pointing out a major **difference** between those who had gained God's approval by faith in the Old Testament

era over and against those who have gained God's approval by faith in the New Testament era (Hebrews 11:39-40).

So what was this major difference? The answer can be found in **Hebrews 11:39**. So let me now read this verse. And what does it say? It says this, **"And all these, having gained approval through their faith (referring to all the Old Testament examples that the author had put forward in chapter 11) did not receive what was promised."**

So based on Hebrews 11:39 what was the major difference? The major difference was this: Those walking by faith in the Old Testament, though having received a promise, never saw the fulfillment of the promise that they had received. That was the major difference.

So what was the promise that they had been given but had never received? The promise that they had been given but had never received was the coming of the Messiah, whom they believed in His coming would bring them the salvation that they were counting on, as they lived by faith (1 Peter 1:10,11).

So did these Old Testament examples of faith actually see the salvation that they were counting on as actually being tied to the promise of the coming Messiah? Yes! This is why the Old Testament prophets were continually searching the scriptures to better understand who this person was and when he would come.

Let me read for you **1 Peter 1:10-11**, **"As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, (11) seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow."**

So what was the difference between the Old Testament era saints who had gained God's approval by faith and those who gained God's approval by faith in the New Testament era? One had been given the promise of the Messiah but had not received it while the other had.

So why didn't the Old Testament era saints who had gained God's approval by faith not receive what had been promised?

Let me read for you **verse 40. "... because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect."**

They did not receive what was promised because that was not God's plan. God's plan was that we, those living the New Testament era, would be the ones who would receive it.

And did this put us in a better position to walk by faith than they were? Absolutely! Isn't this exactly what the verse tells us? We have been **"provided something better."**

We are in a far better position to walk by faith than they were, for we know the Messiah very well. We know who He is. We know what He did for us through His death, and we know that we, through His death, can now come boldly to the throne of grace to receive grace to help in the time of our need.

But it was not all bad for them, was it? Why is that? It is because the Messiah came and did what he had to do in order that all those who have chosen to walk by faith might be blessed with salvation, not only those living in the New Testament era but also those who had lived in the Old Testament era as well.

CONCLUSION

So how many groups of people are there in this world? There are two groups of people in this world. There are those, who as an expression of their faith in God and His word have chosen to live by faith. And then there are those, who lacking faith in God and His word have chosen not to live by faith.

And how will those who have chosen to walk by faith be rewarded? In the life to come they will be rewarded with heaven. And how will they be rewarded in the here and now? They will be able to see and experience the power of God unleashed in their lives.

So is walking by faith worth it when we consider the rewards? Yes! Absolutely! And if we are able by God's grace to do this, what can we expect to happen? We will be able to accomplish what God has set before us

to accomplish and to endure the things that God has set before us to endure.
So ...

May we, by God's grace, **live** by faith so that we through God's power might be able to accomplish the things He has called us to accomplish and to endure the things He has called us to endure.