

July 14, 2019 - Hebrews 11: 31-40 - "Growing in faith through Persecution"  
*pt. II*

## Introduction:

Dozens of citizens in St. Louis Park, Minnesota chanted, "USA, USA" and recited the Pledge of Allegiance in defiance of city council leaders. The city council voted to stop reciting the pledge before meetings because it might offend newcomers to the community. Councilman Tim Brausen said "We concluded that in order to create a more welcoming environment to a diverse community we're going to forgo saying the Pledge of Allegiance before every meeting," However, the real issue is reciting the phrase, "one nation under God".

Social media too is cracking down on Conservative content. We are living through the greatest assault on free speech in American history. "If it's pro-America, if it's pro-Israel, if it's pro-faith & religion, it's likely to be censored by Google / YouTube and any leftist organization. They are set on their agenda to: maintain the right to kill unborn babies up until the moment of birth. Abolish the family. Censor the speech of anyone who dares disagree with them and expunge any vestige of Christianity in America. We as Christians must...

## I. Stay focused on God's purpose (11:31).

1. You may think God can't use you to do any great thing, but God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. We know this because of the truth in Ephesians 2:10--- **For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.** Don't allow the dream squashes to silent you, don't allow the liberals to pull you into their ungodly camp. Have the courage of the Old Patriarchs of the faith.

2. Next in this passage we read: **By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.** (11:31). Before taking Jericho, Joshua sent spies into the city. Rahab hid them in her house... She had only heard stories of the God of Israel, probably from some of her traveling customers. However, even with so little knowledge-and all of it secondhand-she has incredible faith and believes God will give Jericho to the Israelites.

Rahab is a surprising entry in "Faith's Hall of Fame" because she was a Gentile and a prostitute. Yet, because of her faith, shown by welcoming the spies, God spares her and her family when Jericho is destroyed (Josh. 2:9, 11; 6:17b). Even more surprising is that Rahab a Canaanite prostitute, becomes the great, great grandmother of King David and a key person in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Mt 1:5-6). Salvation is offered to all! Your faith will grow if you stay away from negative people stay focused on God's purpose, and...

## II. Exchange your pride for God's power (11:32-38).

1. Because of the limits of time, the great roll call of the heroes of our faith continues as the author simply lists the names of people who through faith: **Subdued kingdoms:** Some of these were Joshua, David, King Asa, Jehoshaphat, King Hezekiah, and King Josiah.

**Wrought righteousness:** Some of these were Noah, Elijah, Elisha, and the other prophets in general; King Josiah also.

**Obtained promises:** Among these we could include Caleb, Gideon, and Barak.

**Stopped the mouths of lions:** These include Daniel, David, and Benaiah (one of David's mighty men).

**Quenched the violence of fire:** Among these are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

**Escaped the edge of the sword:** David escaped the sword of Goliath and the sword of Saul; Moses escaped the sword of Pharaoh; and Elijah escaped the sword of Jezebel.

**Out of weakness were made strong:** these are Sarah, Gideon, Abraham, Esther, and King Hezekiah.

**Waxed valiant in fight:** Some of the many in this description are David, King Asa, and Jehoshaphat.

**Women received their dead raised to life again:** The Old Testament mentions at least two who fit this description, the widow of Zarepheth and the Shunamite woman.

The key word in verse 36 is **others**. All those previously mentioned were victors who escaped danger and death. However, others did not have a miraculous deliverance like that of Noah, Moses, or Rahab.

2. Some endured mocking's, scourging's, bonds, and imprisonment. Others were stoned, sawn asunder, and slain with the sword. Some heroes of faith wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (11:36-37). These are listed so we will know it is not always God's will to deliver us our way; therefore, sometimes we must simply endure. A great example of this truth is found in Daniel 3:17-18.

Another example, the apostle Paul had what he calls a thorn in the flesh that was tormenting him. This great man of faith prayed three specific times for God to take it away (**2 Cor. 12:7-8**).

There are at least three kinds of grace in the Bible: **empowering**, or sustaining, grace (Acts 4:33), **saving** grace (Eph. 2:8), and **equipping** grace (1 Pet. 4:10). When God allows us to have a problem He doesn't take away, He gives us sustaining grace to live with it. There is an old saying: "God will never put more on us than He gives us the grace to bear."

3. God's power is made perfect in our weakness. Sometimes God allows us to go through the fires of affliction to burn away our pride and self-confidence. We will never experience God's power until we get rid of our pride. James 4:6 expresses this truth---

Our faith will never grow until we face a problem we can't handle on our own. God wants our faith to grow continually; therefore, life is a series of problems we can't deal with by ourselves. Sometimes we will be like Paul and some who were not delivered. What does Hebrews 11:38a tell us of those with such faith, the world was not worthy. The world is not necessarily friendly to people of faith,... and the world isn't worthy of them either.

The world forced some of God's saints to live like animals in deserts, mountains, dens, and caves (11:38b). They were denied the world's comfort but received God's commendation.

To make your faith grow, stay away from negative people, stay focused on God's purpose, Exchange your pride to God's power, and ...

### III. Stand on God's promises (11:39-40).

1. All the great heroes of faith, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise (11:39). Some received some of the promises such as the Promised Land-but none of the Old Testament heroes received the ultimate Promise, the Messiah, a Savior. Everyone in the Old Testament died at least four hundred years before Christ was born.

2. But OT saints went to heaven by demonstrating the same saving faith as NT believers. How is that possible? Verse 40 tells us: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. People in the OT were saved by the same faith as you and I. They were saved by faith, **looking forward** to what Christ would do on the cross. We are saved by faith, **looking back** at what He did. The OT saints had only a shadow of the coming sacrifice, but they were faithful to what they had.

### Conclusion:

One critical point of this chapter is faith doesn't guarantee us a life free of problems and pain. James tells us to count it all joy when we face trials of various kinds (Jas. 1:2).

Having problems that don't go away teaches us to faithfully wait on the Lord to fulfill His promise. David writes: **I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. <sup>2</sup>He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay (Psa. 40:1-2a-b).**

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