

An Exposition of Hebrews

Lesson 17 – Chapter 11:30-12:2 ³⁴¹⁷

Passage NASU	Commentary & Analysis	Bible Interprets the Bible References																								
<p>Contextual Transition: Forty years had passed since the last event that mentions the faith of the Israelites. It is apparent that the Israelites in the wilderness were not commended for their faith and in fact all of the adults of that generation died in the wilderness, without demonstrating faith and were not allowed to enter the promised land. How fickle was the faith of God’s chosen people, even in midst of miraculous provision and care. Water gushing from a rock, manna from heaven, healing from serpents because of a staff, God’s frequent judgment directly on those who disobeyed, etc.</p>																										
<p>By Faith They Overcame Now entering the promised land, a time of miraculous protection and provision will begin again from God’s hand to this younger generation that were graciously spared to see the promised land.</p>																										
<p>11:30 <i>By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.</i></p>	<p>This battle strategy from an earthly perspective is probably the dumbest strategy ever used in defeating an enemy. It could have made the Israelites look like fools.</p> <p>But because it did work and in working it brought glory to God and brought the fear of pagan men of this strange and alien God of the Hebrews namely - Jehovah. (YHWH)</p>																									
<p>11:31 <i>By faith <u>Rahab</u> the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.</i></p>	<p><u>Rahab</u>, a female prostitute, a Gentile of pagan background, became an Old Testament saint of God most holy. Her faith was not just an intellectual assent as to Truth, but rather was an existential faith that drove her to fear their God and to take action against the world as she knew it, risking her life and family. Her act of assistance was treasonous to her natural people, but was entirely heroic to God’s people. She became the mother of Boaz and is listed in the genealogy of Jesus the Christ in Matt 1:5.</p>	<p>a. Josh 2:1-14</p> <p>b. Josh 2:15-21</p> <p>Notice the “proto-evangelion” of vv. 18 & 21. ZPEB; Vol 5; p. 26</p>																								
<p>Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible; 5 volumes; 247 contributors; 4978 pages; New \$240; Used \$7 and up on Amazon;</p>																										
<p>11:32-34 <i>And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, ³³who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.</i></p>	<p>Here’s a quick summary that certainly is not complete, but only meant to be illustrative: Who are these guys?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Gideon –</td> <td>a Judge & military leader of Israel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Barak –</td> <td>mentioned in Judges 4-5 (mentioned 15x in association with Deborah)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Samson –</td> <td>a Judge of Israel tasked with opposing the Philistines</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jephthah –</td> <td>a Judge of Israel tasked with subduing the Ammonites</td> </tr> <tr> <td>David –</td> <td>a shepherd anointed as a great King of Israel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Samuel –</td> <td>the last Judge, foe of idolatry & immorality within Israel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Prophets –</td> <td>all of Israel’s prophets that suffered for obeying God</td> </tr> </table> <p>Actions which are derived from various one’s faith include:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Conquered kingdoms;</td> <td>Performed acts of righteousness;</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Obtained promises;</td> <td>Shut the mouth of lions;</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Quenched the power of fire;</td> <td>Escaped the edge of the sword;</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Made strong from weakness;</td> <td>Became mighty in war;</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Put foreign armies to flight.</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Gideon –	a Judge & military leader of Israel	Barak –	mentioned in Judges 4-5 (mentioned 15x in association with Deborah)	Samson –	a Judge of Israel tasked with opposing the Philistines	Jephthah –	a Judge of Israel tasked with subduing the Ammonites	David –	a shepherd anointed as a great King of Israel	Samuel –	the last Judge, foe of idolatry & immorality within Israel	The Prophets –	all of Israel’s prophets that suffered for obeying God	Conquered kingdoms;	Performed acts of righteousness;	Obtained promises;	Shut the mouth of lions;	Quenched the power of fire;	Escaped the edge of the sword;	Made strong from weakness;	Became mighty in war;	Put foreign armies to flight.	
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<p>11:35-36 <i>Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; ³⁶and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also</i></p>	<p>Resurrection:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Elijah’s hostess –</td> <td>1 Kng 17:17-24;</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Elisha & the Shunamite woman –</td> <td>2 Kng 4:8-37;</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jesus & the widow of Nain –</td> <td>Lk 7:11-17;</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Brother of Mary & Martha of Bethany –</td> <td>Jn 11:1-46;</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disciple Dorcas raised by Peter for the widows –</td> <td>Ac 9:36-43;</td> </tr> </table> <p><u>A better resurrection</u> suggests that there will be degrees of reward at the <i>bema seat of Christ</i> depending on faithfulness in serving Christ for the glory of God. 2 Cor 5:10</p> <p>Women saints of both Old and New Testaments suffered social ridicule, scourgings, and chains in their imprisonment.</p>		Elijah’s hostess –	1 Kng 17:17-24;	Elisha & the Shunamite woman –	2 Kng 4:8-37;	Jesus & the widow of Nain –	Lk 7:11-17;	Brother of Mary & Martha of Bethany –	Jn 11:1-46;	Disciple Dorcas raised by Peter for the widows –	Ac 9:36-43;														
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<p>chains and imprisonment.</p>	<p>Gr. mockings <i>εμπαλιμων empaigmon</i> (Str. 1701) 1x; meaning mockings, scoffings, scorns, jeers ^{NIV}</p>	
<p>11:37-38 <i>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.</i></p>	<p>All of these saints of old were hated, despised, persecuted, lived in poverty and exclusion, and many were even killed for their faithful witness.</p> <p>Here is undeniable evidence of the depravity of men outside of God’s grace. Lost men and women are not neutral. Their view is not “live and let live”. They may often say this, but it is a gross misstatement of their very nature. There is a thin line between tolerance and persecution!</p>	<p>John 15:18-21 <i>"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. ²¹But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me."</i></p>
<p>11:39-40 <i>And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.</i></p>	<p>“True faith has the courage to count on salvation. These faithful saints had to live in hope. They knew very little about the nature or the time or the means of God’s salvation. But they knew it was coming, and this was the basis of their trust. They had abiding confidence that one day God would do the necessary thing to redeem them and reward them. What happened to them before that time was not consequential. They did not receive what was promised but they had gained approval through their faith. Their faith was not in some immediate fulfillment, but in the ultimate fulfillment of the promises. Here is where faith is most tested and where it most matters.” John MacArthur’s <i>New Testament Commentary on Hebrews</i>; p. 369</p>	
<p>1 Pet 1:10-13 <i>As to this salvation, <u>the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries</u>, ¹¹seeking 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. ¹²<u>It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look.</u> ¹³<u>Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.</u></i></p>		
<p>The Race of Faith Paul used a number of athletic metaphors including a physical race to express the nature of our Christian lives. These two following verses express the nature of the life of faith in a very constructive, illustrative, and useful way.</p>		
<p>12:1-2 <u>Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.</u></p>	<p>Here is a powerful transition (Therefore) from our “Hall of Fame” of the Old Testament saints to this concluding passage: To all the Hebrews that the author is writing to and to all the Church throughout the ages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, our lives in Christ has consequence. We are men and women of consequent faith, not bystanders, not just observers. We are critical participators of the race of faith. We are the anchor leg of the relay. • Let us lay aside unnecessary and worldly desires and passions and finish this life’s race with dedication to bringing glory to the Father and the Son. We run this race not in our own strength, but in the strength of the comforter (Latin: com – forte: with – strength). • This race is not a sprint, but rather is a life-long “ultra-marathon”. God’s glory is expressed to the world through our dedication to and faithfulness in our performance for His glory!!! God has prescribed this race for each one of us. We dare not shame Christ’s name in this holy effort. • Our strength and motivation for this lifelong, daunting effort is to keep our spiritual eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. 	

- His trial, on the cross, was much greater than our trial in this life. We owe the love of a lifetime of our own dedication and work, which effort expresses our own integrity and love given to Him.

This race is not a game, it is serious spiritual stuff!!!

The Spiritual Nature of This Race:

1 Pet 2:18-25 *Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. ¹⁹For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? **But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.** ²¹For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, ²²**WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;** ^{Is 53:9b} ²³and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, **so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness;** for by His wounds you were healed. ²⁵For you were continually straying like sheep, but **now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.***

Summary/Conclusions/Comments: We conclude this Old Testament “Hall of Fame” description in order to convict the saints of today and throughout the ages of living a life of serious purpose and consideration of the great promises God has made to us through Christ and His mediatorial sacrifice at Calvary. Dare we fail to consider the seriousness of having been called to and received unto the Christian life of great grace. We dare not fail or shame the name of Christ in this life, but rather to continuously die to the sin nature of our old lives and to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to do such!

Important Quote(s)

Jesus Christ demands self-denial, that is, self-negation (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23), as a necessary condition of discipleship. Self-denial is a summons to submit to the authority of God as Father and of Jesus as Lord and to declare lifelong war on one's instinctive egoism. What is to be negated is not personal self or one's existence as a rational and responsible human being. Jesus does not plan to turn us into zombies, nor does he ask us to volunteer for a robot role. The required denial is of carnal self, the egocentric, self deifying urge with which we were born, which dominates us to ruinousness in our natural state.

J. I. Packer; *God's Plan for You*; p. 55

For today, by and large, Christians no longer live for heaven and, therefore, no longer understand, let alone practice detachment from the world. Nowadays nonconformity to the world is limited to the means that the world adopts to achieve its goals and rarely touches the goals themselves. Does the world around us seek pleasure, profit, and privilege? So do we. We have no readiness or strengths to renounce these objectives, for we have recast Christianity into a mold that stresses happiness above holiness, blessings here above blessedness hereafter, health and wealth as God's best gifts, and death, especially early death, not as thankworthy deliverance from the miseries of a sinful world (the view that the old Anglican prayer book expressed), but as the supreme disaster and a constant challenge to faith in God's goodness.

J. I. Packer; *Gods' Plan for You*; p. 64

When therefore the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, He was crucified as the last Adam. All that was in the first Adam was gathered up and done away in Him. We were included there. As the last Adam He wiped out the old race; as the second Man He brings in the new race. It is in His resurrection that He stands forth as the second Man, and there too we are included. "For if we have become united with Him by the likeness of His death, we shall be also by the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom 6:5). We died to Him as the last Adam; we live to Him as the second Man. The Cross is thus the mighty act of God which translates us from Adam to Christ.

Watchman Nee; *The Normal Christian Life*, Hendrickson Christian Classic; p. 25.

As soon as we have accepted our death with Christ as a fact, Satan will do his best to demonstrate convincingly by the evidence of our day-to-day experience that we are not dead at all, but very much alive. So we must choose. Will we believe Satan's lie or God's truth? Are we going to be governed by appearances or by what God says?

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* - Hendrickson Christian Classic; p. 46