

"The Walk of Faith"

Part 23

11:1-40

Introduction: Tonight we return to our study of the book of Hebrews and as we do we come to a very important section of Hebrews 11. Let me walk you through a bit of review then we will better understand the section we are about to enter into.

Here in Hebrews 11 the writer has been reaching back to the Old Testament and lifting up examples of what it is to live by faith. This entire section started with the writer's quote of Habakkuk 2:4 in Hebrews 10:38.

Hebrews 10:38

³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Then in the next verse the writer gave them encouragement.

Hebrews 10:39

³⁹ But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

The writer then led his readers into Hebrews 11 and he defined faith and then he gave the examples which we have looked at.

He touched upon the lives of Able, Enoch, Noah, Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Israel at Jericho and Rahab. These all demonstrated great faith as they believed in the promises of God. They had never received the promises of God but with their mind's eye they were able to see down the corridor of time to the day when the promises would be fulfilled.

Hebrews 11:13

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Now it would be easy for the Hebrew believers to look at these examples of people living by faith and feel as though they could never live up to their levels of faith. It could be the same way for us also. We could look at these individuals and conclude that they were people who were far above the average believer. Therefore we could feel inferior to those who have been listed and to reach their level of faith seems like an impossibility. As a matter of fact it would be possible for some believers to become discouraged because they fail in the walk of faith.

This is exactly why we have the next verse in our study.

I. The Examples of Faith

Part 20

A. The Faith of the Judges

Notice Hebrews 11:32

Now for the next couple of weeks we are going to focus upon the first part of Hebrews 11:32. Here in Hebrews 11:32a the writer now moves on in the Old Testament and he now comes to the book of Judges and he points to 4 of the Judges. We see here Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah. As we step into the lives of these 4 men they will be a great encouragement to all of us. They were all men who struggled with faith but the faith which they did have was honored by God and through them God accomplished great things. As we work our way through the lives of the individuals we shall see that there is much that we have in common with them.

The Background:

The book of Judges covers a period of over 400 years and it covers the darkest time period which Israel ever went through. The period of the Judges covers the time from the death of Joshua up to the time when Saul was crowned king. You see the Judges ruled up until the time of the kings. The events of the book of Ruth take place when the Judges ruled and the story of Ruth is to let us know that God was still at work with His people. Now let me show you what this time was like.

Judges 21:25

²⁵ *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

This verse gives us some insight into what it was like during the days when the Judges ruled. Now let me take this thought further. The book of Judges starts when Joshua died.

Judges 2:8-14

⁸ *And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.*

⁹ *And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.*

¹⁰ *And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.*

¹¹ *And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:*

¹² *And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.*

¹³ *And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.*

¹⁴ *And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.*

Now the problem was that Israel failed to carry out the military orders given to them by God. They did not exterminate the people of Canaan but instead they permitted them to live.

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

¹⁶ *But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:*

¹⁷ *But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:*

¹⁸ **That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.**

Let me show you how they failed.

Judges 1:21a, 27a, 28, 29a, 30a, 31a, 33a

²¹ *And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem;*

²⁷ *Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants*

²⁸ *And it came to pass, **when Israel was strong**, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.*

²⁹ *Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites*

³⁰ *Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants*

³¹ *Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants*

³³ *Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants*

Throughout the book of Judges there is what is known as a SIN CYCLE that is repeated over and over again. There were 4 stages to the SIN CYCLE.

1. **Sin**

Judges 2:13

¹³ *And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.*

2. **Oppression**

Judges 2:14, 15

¹⁴ *And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.*

¹⁵ *Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.*

3. **Repentance**

4. **Deliverance**

Judges 2:16-18

¹⁶ *Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.*

¹⁷ *And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.*

¹⁸ *And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: **for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.***

After the Judge died Israel returned back to idolatry.

Judges 2:19

¹⁹ *And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.*

Every time the SIN CYCLE happened Israel went deeper and deeper into sin. Each generation corrupted themselves more than the generation before them.

All of this helps us to see the depth of the darkness which existed in the days when the Judges ruled. There was no accountability and everyone did that which was right in his own eyes.

The Common Ground of the Judges:

If we were to go through the book of Judges and we were to look at each of the judges we would see that there is was common ground with every one of them. The common ground was that each of the judges was someone that no one would have picked to be a judge or a deliverer for the people of Israel. Some of the judges were weak, some battled with weaknesses, some were fearful, and others came from back grounds that were not ideal. The point which we are going to see is that these were people much like you and me. They struggled with their faith. They struggled with their weaknesses. They were average people whom God used in the midst of very dark days.

This now brings us to the first Judge which the writer of Hebrews points to.

I. Gideon

a. The Setting

Notice Judges 6:1-6

Here we see the first 3 stages of the sin cycle. Israel sinned, and then God delivered them into the hand of the Midianites and after 7 years Israel repented. Now let us see the 4th stage which is the deliverer.

Notice Judges 6:11

Here we are introduced to the deliverer or the judge and it is Gideon. This is the man whom god will use to deliver Israel. But in this verse he does not look like someone who would be the deliver. He is by a winepress threshing wheat. The winepress was down in the ground and was not a place to thresh wheat. Wheat was threshed in the open where the wind would carry away the chaff. The picture we get of Gideon here is one that is very sad. He is in a hole in the ground and he is tossing the wheat up in the air to separate the

wheat from the chaff. He would have been covered in chaff at this time and he is doing all of this in fear. He is fearful of the Midianites and he is hiding so that they will not find him. He has very little courage.

Notice Judges 6:12

The angel of the Lord referred to Gideon as "a mighty man of valor". This was certainly not an accurate description of Gideon at this time but it was a description of what he would become.

Notice Judges 6:13

When I read verse 13 I see no hope in the mind and the heart of Gideon. Gideon could not see any evidence of the hand of God at work with his people. Gideon looks like a man that has come to accept the conditions around him as unchangeable. The last thing in the mind of Gideon was him seeing himself as the man to deliver the people of Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Let me show you why he had no faith at this time.

Notice Judges 6:14-15

Gideon underestimated the power of God for 2 reasons:

1. He was not from a rich prominent family.
2. He was the "LEAST" in his father's house. This could mean he was the youngest or he was the smallest or both.

Conclusion:

There are several thoughts which I want you to see from this.

1. **You do not need to be "prominent" in this world to be used in a mighty way by God.**

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

²⁶ *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:*

²⁷ *But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;*

²⁸ *And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:*

May 18, 2017

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²⁹ *That no flesh should glory in his presence.*

2. **God's power is NOT limited by our ability.**

God is not looking for people who are strong and mighty in the flesh. He is not looking for men and women who are equipped for the battle but He is looking for people who are willing and available to surrender over to Him. He will give us what we need for the battle. He will accomplish things through our lives which will focus all the glory to Him.