

Faith at the Battle-Front  
Hebrews 11:32-40

February 1, 2015

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<sup>A</sup> Colossians 1:12-13

<sup>B</sup> 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7

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<sup>C</sup> Revelation 2:10

<sup>D</sup> Luke 9:23, 14:27, 9:58

<sup>E</sup> Galatians 4:4-5

<sup>F</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:9

A. Introduction

1. We Are in a Battle

- a. there is no doubt about it
- b. when a person becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ there is a mighty change that happens
- c. immediately – in a split second
- d. oh, it isn't that this person becomes suddenly transformed in such a fashion to a shining figure in white robes – that is a life-time work of the Holy Spirit
- e. but it is a change just as radical:
- f. Colossians 1:12-13 describes this change: “<sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. <sup>13</sup> For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,”
- g. his or her nationality has been changed; there is a new allegiance; they have changed sides
- h. the result is a foregone conclusion: they have entered into a battle
- i. it has been said by more than one person, when we come to Christ, we are taken from a battle we cannot win, to one that we cannot lose – but to wage that battle requires faith

2. The Fight of Faith

- a. Paul encouraged young pastor Timothy: “Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:12)
- b. and gave himself as an example, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7)
- c. today we are looking at some men – some named, many unnamed – whose faith was tested in the battles of life
- d. these men were not perfect – they had their defects and deficiencies
- e. nor, did they always seem to be on the winning side – that is, as the person without faith sees these things
- f. but God counted them worthy to be listed as His heroes of faith.

B. Faith in Victory . . . . . Hebrews 11:32-35a

1. As Rulers

- a. in Israel the primary role of a judge and a king was to govern God's people under the instruction of God Himself

- (A) their job was to point people back to serving God
- (B) in the times of these men, Israel fell away from worshipping God to the serving of idols; God followed this by giving Israel into subjection of their pagan neighbours; then the people repented and God's raised up these judges to deliver them
- (C) that was the role played by the six men mentioned by name
- b. v 11: "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,"
- c. the write of Hebrews does not list all the judges, and only one king
  - (A) for the time to do so would have prevented finishing this book
  - (B) but those he does list, had notable victories, we'll come to those
- d. but were also men – like every other man – who had weaknesses; flaws in their character
  - (A) and so, if God could use them for their faith; even weak faith, then He is able to use us through our faith
  - (B) Gideon was fearful, doubting, and made errors in judgement in his later life – but God accomplished the defeat of Midian by him
  - (C) Barak – why Barak? It was Deborah who seemed to have all the faith – yet God defeated Jabin the king of Canaan by him
  - (D) Samson – how well we know his weakness which led to his undoing at the hands of Delilah – yet in the faith that he showed at the end of his life, God by him defeated more Philistines at his death than in his life
  - (E) Jephthah – who made that rash vow that brought a life sentence upon his daughter – still it was by him the Ammonites were defeated
  - (F) David – though a man after God's own heart, yet falling into sin – yet God by him brought all the lands promised to Abraham under Israel's rule
  - (G) and Samuel – last of the judges, first of the succession of prophets, made the mistake of appointing his unqualified sons as his successors – but God used him both as a leader of God's armies, and then as the counsellor to kings Saul and David, as they ruled
- e. so, to these in particular are related the political and national victories that are listed in particular in the verses 33-34, "who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, ... escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight ..."
- (A) these victories of the judges have already been described
- (B) righteousness in this verse is not that which enables a person to stand before God, but another aspect of the word: they sought justice; Christians will hate injustice and love justice
- (C) these were men who when God promised victory, believed Him and acted according to those promises

## 2. As Prophets

- a. they had a two-fold job to do
  - (A) to give counsel to the kings in both spiritual and political matters
  - (B) to proclaim unto Israel God's will: how, why and when God would deliver Israel; how, why and when God would punish them
- b. and they as well had victories such as did the judges
- c. they preached and promoted justice, so their victories are described as well in verses 33-35a, "<sup>33</sup> who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> Women received *back* their dead by resurrection ..."
- (A) prophets were also instruments in defeating Israel's enemies
- (B) by faith, Daniel in the lions' den saw God shut the mouths of the lions
- (C) Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego were delivered from the furnace so hot and fiery that those died who cast them in
- (D) Elijah was able to escape from Jezebel's fury
- (E) Elijah and Elisha each raised a boy from the dead back to his mother
- d. yes, these prophets had their victories of faith no less than the judges who preceded them
- e. but, there is another side of the battles of faith; suffering for our faith

## C. Faith under Suffering . . . . . Hebrews 11:35b-38

### 1. In Martyrdom

- a. let us look at the following verses, and select those that deal with those who lost their lives on account of their faith, "<sup>35</sup> ... and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; <sup>36</sup> and others (*mgn, Lit.: received the trial of*) mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment <sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; ..."
- (A) by the prophets' faith those boys experienced resurrection and restoration to their mothers; but these other men disdained to deny their faith – that was the cost for them to be released – choosing rather to have a better resurrection
- (B) the resurrected boys would later die; the resurrection of the faithful is to eternal life, never again to die
- b. the prophets and others suffered for their faith
  - (A) Michaiah and Jeremiah were imprisoned for faithfully preaching

- (B) Zechariah, the son of Jehoida the high priest, was stoned in the temple court at the command of king Joash whom Jehoida had preserved from death and made king (2 Chronicles 24:20ff)
  - (C) Isaiah, according to Jewish tradition, was sawn in two with a wooden saw at the command of king Manasseh
  - (D) perhaps those words “they were tempted” seem a bit weak compared with the others, but this is not to be thought of as a mere passing inclination to sin: what the context describes is the application of torture in order to bring them to deny their faith
  - (E) such trial is warned of in Revelation 2:10: “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”
- c. when the Authorised Version of the Bible was translated, it included, not as part of the inspired Scriptures, but as records worthy of the Christian’s reading, those books that make up the Apocrypha
- (A) these were written after the close of the OT and recorded stories of people and events in the silent years until the NT
  - (B) among these are the books of the Maccabees, that Jewish family that rebelled against the rule of Greece (167 to 160<sup>BC</sup>)
  - (C) in them is told the story of seven sons of one woman who obeyed her in remaining faithful to God under the torture ordered by the evil Antiochus Epiphanes to make them deny their faith
  - (D) these were events closer in time to the Hebrews reading this book than are the events of the American revolution
  - (E) these verses would remind Jewish readers of these faithful men

## 2. In Maltreatment

- a. let us fill in some of the phrases we left out in speaking of martyrdom
- b. “<sup>36</sup> and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> ... they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated <sup>38</sup> ..., wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.”
- (A) it was not only the extremities of death that were suffered by these men for their faith – and gruesome death at that – but also the day to day costs of faith in their life and living conditions
- (B) though they lived before Jesus was born, nevertheless they understood the truth of the Master’s words, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ... Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 9:23, 14:27)

- c. rough clothing was a mark of prophets, with the names of Elijah and John the Baptist coming to mind, but these men were not dressed in this fashion as a mark of their holding such an office
  - (A) rather it was on account of necessity – they were destitute
  - (B) the justice God desired for Israel was forgotten in the way that these people of God were treated by their own nation, their kin
  - (C) they lived a physically comfortless life, just as Jesus Himself could later say, “[The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.](#)” (Luke 9:58)
  - (D) they were cast out of their homes as were later Christian believers
- d. some of the victories of faith appear as defeats, but these could look forward to ...

D. Ultimate Approval. . . . . Hebrews 11:38-40

1. Worthy Before God

- a. in the midst of these suffering by God’s faithful, is dropped in this very short and emotional phrase, ‘[... of whom the world was not worthy ...](#)’
- b. the world – unbelieving Israel – did not consider those who were walking in faith before God as being worthy of living in this world – that is why they treated them the way they did
- c. the world – unbelieving mankind – does not consider the Christian who walks in faith before God as worthy of the world’s consideration – that is why they seek to pass the laws they do, to dismiss Christ
- d. but God instead considers that the world is not worthy of such men

2. God’s Eternal Approval

- a. Why then did they suffer? ... why was the promise delayed with them as it had been with the earlier heroes of faith, that they ‘[... died in faith, without receiving the promises ...](#)’ (verse 13)?
- b. verses 39-40: “<sup>39</sup> [And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised \(lit., obtain the promise\),](#) <sup>40</sup> [because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.](#)” – their faith was not pointless
  - (A) that they did not receive the promise – promise here is singular and specific, they did not see the coming of Messiah, the Christ – was through no defect in their faith, nor a reason to discard it
  - (B) God’s timing was otherwise than their expectations
- c. “<sup>4</sup> [But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,](#) <sup>5</sup> [so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.](#)” (Galatians 4:4-5)

- (A) that is God's eternal approval of those who come to Him in faith
- (B) that they be accounted as His own very dear children

#### E. Conclusion

1. you, too, can be join this great army of the heroes of the faith
  - a. for now the promise – Jesus Christ – has been revealed; made known
  - b. in faith, set your life to follow Him; to walk in His ways
  - c. to trust in Him, rely in Him; to be faithful to His cause
  - d. whether it be in victories; or whether it be in sufferings
  - e. because, "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:9)

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- Barnes – *Notes on the New Testament, et alia*, by Rev Albert Barnes, Gall & Inglis, Edinburgh  
BM – *Biblical Museum*, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870  
EBC – *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan  
*Hebrews*, by Leon Morris  
EGT – *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Hodder & Stoughton  
*Hebrews*, by Marcus Dods  
Gill – *Exposition of the Old Testament, Exposition of the New Testament*, by John Gill, D.D.  
Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, [www.holwick.com](http://www.holwick.com).  
NICNT – *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*  
*The Epistle to the Hebrew*, by F. F. Bruce  
RWP – *Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament*, by Dr. A. T. Robertson  
TYN – *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*  
*Hebrews*, by Donald Guthrie