

Hebrews 11:29-40 – By Faith

In John 5:39-40, Jesus said to the Jewish religious leaders, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.”

Religiously following the law of Moses is not the path to eternal life. Those who truly believe in Jesus Christ have eternal life. Faith is essential to living for God. From the book of Genesis, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were called out as examples of true faith. From the book of Exodus, Moses and his parents were called out as examples of faith. Yes, Moses who was associated with the law was a man of faith. Tonight’s passage calls out more people from the Old Testament who demonstrated an enduring faith in God.

Read Hebrews 11:29-31.

Verse 28 says “by faith he [Moses] kept the Passover”. Verse 29 says “by faith they [the people] crossed the Red Sea”. It is an interesting switch between Moses in verse 28 and “they” in verse 29. What significance is there to this, if any? Did all the people who crossed the Red Sea have a saving faith? What happened to the Egyptians who tried to cross the Red Sea? See Exodus 14. (11:29)

In verse 30, what happened by faith? It is interesting that Joshua, known for his faith, was not mentioned by name. Who had faith that they would conquer Jericho? See Joshua 6. (11:30)

In verse 31, what did Rahab do by faith? What was the risk that she took? See Joshua 2, 6. (11:31)

Read Hebrews 11:32-40.

Verse 32 covers the books of Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel and the prophets. Gideon (Judges 6-8), Barak (Judges 4-5), Samson (Judges 13-16) and Jephthah (Judges 11-12) were mentioned from the book of Judges. Are there any names that you are surprised to see on this list? Samuel was mentioned from the book of 1 Samuel. David was mentioned from the books of 1 & 2 Samuel. Is there any name that is conspicuously missing? Which prophets come to mind as men of faith? (11:32)

Based on verses 33-34, what were some of the deeds, done by faith, of the men mentioned in verse 32? (11:33-34)

Which women received back their dead through resurrection? Which prophets were involved in these resurrections? See 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:8-37. Zechariah was stoned to death in the court of the temple. See 2 Chronicles 24:17-22. There are traditions about other prophets being murdered. Jesus alluded to this in Luke 11:49-51. There are sources outside the Bible which say that Isaiah was sawn in two and that Jeremiah was stoned to death in Egypt. Verse 35 starts with temporary resurrection which restores someone to their earthly life only to die again. The verse ends with an implication of martyrdom which resulted in a better and permanent resurrection. (11:35)

What other trials did these Old Testament believers endure? These trials may remind us of what some of the early Christians endured. And, as Jesus said, the world's hate for us continues to this day. 1 Peter 5:9 reminds us that suffering for Christ is something which is experienced throughout the world. Sampson was in prison. See Judges 16:21-25. Jeremiah experienced various trials. See Jeremiah 20:2-8; 37:15-16; 38:6-13. What other Old Testament examples are there related to mocking, flogging, chains and imprisonment? (11:36)

Zechariah (2 Chron. 24) was stoned. Tradition says that Jeremiah was stoned. Tradition says that Isaiah was sawn in two. Elijah was known for his garment of hair. See 2 Kings 2:8. Are there any other Old Testament examples that come to mind from verse 37? (11:37)

In verse 38, what was said about those who are mistreated for the name of Christ? How else were these believers described? (11:38)

Verse 39 is a call back to verse 2, "For by it [faith] the people of old received their commendation." The people of chapter 11 were commended for their faith but what was also true about them? (11:39)

What did God provide New Testament believers with which was better? "Better" is a word which has often been used in Hebrews. We have a better hope (7:19), a better covenant (7:22, 8:6), better promises (8:6), better sacrifices (9:23) and a better possession (10:34). It should be obvious from Hebrews that Jesus is a better mediator, a better intercessor and a better priest, among other things. Based on verse 40, how are Old Testament believers tied to New Testament believers? (11:40)