

SERIES: Hebrews

Title: Faith in Times of Suffering

Text: Hebrews 11:32-40

Take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews chapter 11. There are notes in your bulletin. I hope you will use them as we study on the subject of suffering. Hebrews chapter 11 beginning at verse 32.

(READ 11:32-40)

Prayer

It is impossible to describe suffering for everybody. It goes from the smallest thing to the largest thing. Suffering is a part of life. A part of your life and its part of my life. It goes on every day and every week. Have you ever gone out to share <sup>something</sup> good with somebody and you go up to somebody and you say: "Boy, I am going to share some truth and help this person and you open up your mouth and they don't take it right."

And they get upset and they get mad ~~at~~ at you and right away you are blow out of the saddle. And leave saying: "Why Lord, Why?"

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The other day, I was working around the house and nothing seemed to be going right... You know, one of those days when everything you tried to do turned out bad.. And my dear wife reminded me of some of these principles I have preaching about and encouraged me not to lose my self-control. And I said I have to;;; THE LORD IS TRYING TO TEACH ME PATIENCE.....

You buy a new car and after only one week, some fool runs into you... You know,,, Why me, Lord. Life is like this. You buy a new suit and as soon as you pay for it, you discover a whole in the back pocket. Such is life.

And yet, as we move our thinking beyond these little testings of life, we realize that others have gone <sup>before</sup> us who have suffered greatly. And the Bible speaks of all of the suffering, all of this testings, as being from God...

You see our little circle of comfort, often isn't as big as it should be, especially when it comes to describing why things happen. Let me illustrate: In fact you could even draw it on your paper, there. It is a series of circles.

Self

You see, I often drew one circle and inside of it I put SELF...And think: THAT IS THE AREA OF SUFFERING. I cause a lot of my <sup>own</sup> problems. And certainly that is true.

Sin

But my circle isn't big enough. So, I drew another circle around it, in which I see the principle of SIN. I find that sin has caused suffering. So I see that as a root issue. But my circle still isn't big enough.

Cause

And as I expand my circle I see the cause that originally came into the world. There wasn't any suffering before that happened. And it resulted in sin. So, I see the cause. Man begins to work the ground and he finds weeds. Every time I go and work in the yard, which is very seldom...but I am reminded of what Genesis teaches about the cause or the fall of man.

SATAN

But, my circle still isn't big enough. So I make it bigger and I put SATAN in the next circle because I see Him as the cause behind the Cause. Flip Wilson use to say: "The Devil made me do this."

God

But my circle still needs to be bigger..And it is true that all of these cause suffering and the Bible says so, even Satan, himself. He cause the physical problem of Paul. And Paul pleaded with God to remove it. And yet God didn't choose to do that. He said, "My grace is sufficient for you."

God

So, I draw the final circle which is where we all have to come to and that is God...God is the ultimate cause of all suffering...Job said that affliction doesn't come out of the dust. It comes from God....Moses learned that God made man's mouth and that he made the deaf, deaf, and blind, blind. The Lord did that. Ultimately God is behind all suffering. Any many of us don't want to say that. We don't want to accuse God of suffering. But, listen God wants you to blame Him. He is causing suffering. ~~THE QUESTION THAT COMES TO OUR MINDS AND OUR HEARTS~~

The Question that 'ought to get through our thick skulls is WHY..IS..THE... LORD..CAUSING...SUFFERING...WHY THE LITTLE TINY TESTINGS THAT HAPPEN EVERY DAY, that demand our endurance, our patience. And why the great sufferings. Why the tremendous persecutions that people have gone through both in the past and currently. WHY sufferings caused by famine, floods, earthquakes..Why all of this..

The Bible has many, many answers to this question. A few months ago I shared with you 15 reasons why God permits suffering. But there are three basic reasons of which one is taught in this passage. The other two I will just simply mention. I will not deal with them in ~~the~~ detail, but I mention them because they are good for your study.

(1) One reason for suffering is to make me more mature. We all need to be mature. We are so immature when it comes to living and practicing the christian life. And the Bible teaches that suffering will make us more mature.

(2) The other one is for ministry in the life of someone else. God teaches very clearly, especially in that great text of 2 Cor 1:3-5, that God will bring suffering into your life and mine so that we will be able to deal with someone else in their time of need...

Most of us shut our minds to these principles. God isn't allowing you to suffer for no reason at all...He wants to use your suffering in the life of someone else. He wants you to know His comfort..WHY? So that you may comfort others in times of need.

(3) The third principle of suffering and the one used in Hebrews 11, is that GOD THROUGH SUFFERING IS BUILDING OUR ANTICIPATION OF HEAVEN...He is showing us as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4 that the light afflictions of this moment is not worthy to be compared to what God has for us in the future...

And like a suffering and dieing Saint that longs to go home to be with the Lord, God has build into them the anticipation of His presence and being with him forever. All of life is a life of suffering and testing and trails. And some times more severe than many of us have ever experienced up to this point. ~~the~~

But all suffering is to build within us an anticipation of what is coming.  
God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. There will be no more death or suffering or pain. The former things will be done away with and God will make all things new. And we shall rest in his bosom for ever. That is not pie in the sky. That is literal truth.....THE BIBLE IS BUILT ON THAT PRINCIPLE. This world is not my home. I am just passing through. Our home is in heaven.

Paul said, if only in this life we have hope, we of all men are most miserable. We are going home. We don't live here. And I remind myself of that every month when the bills come.....My citizenship is in heaven...Praise the Lord.

Now, that is the introduction to the message. I haven't even got to the message of this night. That was just introduction. Given to you because so often we get tied down in reading about all of this individual sufferings of these great saints, and you forget the point...THAT GOD CAUSES SUFFERING BECAUSE HE HAS A PLAN AND PURPOSE FOR YOU. AND HE WANTS TO BUILD AN ANTICIPATION OF HEAVEN.

11'82-40

(1D) Now let's look at this passage. First of all, from the standpoint of the testimonies of victory that are expressed in this passage. And I would like to share a couple of things with you.

(1E) First of all, the difficulty in naming everyone who has suffered

Paul says in Vs 32: "And what more shall I say? For time will fail me." Then he mentions just a few that he hasn't discussed earlier in Chapter 11. The point is that there are scores of people who have walked the road before us. Many, many who have been examples of faith and have been tested and have suffered severely. And Paul is simply saying that he doesn't have the time or space to recount all the saints.

But he does refer to four men from the time of the Judges.

Four men: Vs 32: Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah. And then he mentions David and Samuel and the rest of the prophets. He puts these men together and he is saying that this is just a few of the examples that we could go into but time does not permit.

(2E) Secondly, He does mention the deeds....of these men. And there is a series of nine things that are mention. And each one is in the Arosit tense in Greek which means at a moment of time. And in this case they are referring to actual, historical events that heppened. Everyone of these statements, and there are nine of them, actually happened. ~~There~~ So, don't just read right by them. ~~There~~ They are important. They are examples of faith. ~~There~~ Men of faith have walked the road before us.

I often hear people say: "Well, I couldn't be like David or Moses. I could never suffer as people did in the past." Oh, ~~YES~~, you could.....They were just people like you and me. They had their problems and frustrations and testings. And they learned to trust God in the trial. *Maybe that is an Problem - we have never learned to trust God*

You see, it isn't much faith that we have until it is tested...That is the point of Hebrews 11. We don't really know our confidence and trust in God until we are under pressure. ~~We~~ when we are under pressure and testings, it is then that we learn the kind of faith and confidence and trust that we have in God. That is what Hebrews 11 is all about. Let's look at some of these deeds.

(1f) One, It isays in Vs 33: "Who by faith conquered kingdoms." It is like an athletic wrestling his oponent down. They did the work. But the Bible says it was by faith that they did the conquering.

And some great examples. These four judges mentioned in Vs 32. And each of them conquered a kingdom all by faith. It certainly was a result of their ability, I will tell you that. In the case of Gideon, it was the Midianites. In the case of Barak, here is a good one, Barak needed the help of Deborah a prophetess to help him have courage. Let, the Bible says Barak is an example of Faith. He believed that God ~~was~~ speaking throug Deborah to go and conquer the Canites. Barak believed God's Word and he acted upon God's Word and a miracle was perform before his eyes.

God does this all the time. All you have to do is respond to the Word. It is human to be afraid. To be afraid of the testing, the battles, it is human to

be afraid. But these men are examples of faith because they trusted God to do what he said he would do. And that is how God wants us to trust him.

For example God tells us in his Word that we are not to complain. James 5:9 says "Do not complain, brethren, against one another." We are not to do it. But we do...then we wonder why we do not have victory and we don't grow and we don't experience the blessings of God. **DON'T COMPLAIN AGAINST YOUR BROTHER OR SISTER IN THE LORD.**

How about gossip....James 4:11 says don't gossip or speak against one another....Don't do it.

How about forgiving one another...Eph 4:32 says to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

You want to be people of faith?.... Examples of Godly living? Having a testimony of Love?...BELIEVE THE WORD...DO WHAT IT SAYS....THEN YOU WILL EXPERIENCE THE BLESSINGS OF GOD.

**(2F) NUMBER TWO, THEY PERFORMED ACTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.** It means they were just in their decisions over the people they had conquered. And that again was by faith. You see, God gave them instructions of what to do. And they believed God and did what he told them and thus they were just. All of these nine statements are testimonies of faith. AND DON'T MISS THAT. Because the point is that you and I in a time of testing, when we exercise faith, its in what God says in the Bible. The Bible is God written revelation. In older times God spoke directly to the prophets, yet today we have it in written form...And faith is not trying to build up courage in yourself, faith is not daring...**FAITH IS BELIEVING..WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY REVEALED.** WHEN GOD HAS GIVEN YOU A PROMISE OR A COMMANDMENT...**FAITH IS TAKING THAT ~~SEE?~~ EXACTLY FOR WHAT GOD SAYS AND BELIEVING AND APPLYING IT TO YOUR LIFE.**

**(3F) Third, they obtained promises.** This means the promises that God gave to them they obtained and experience in their life. God said that he has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. **ARE YOU RIGHT NOW EXPERIENCING GOD'S BLESSINGS?**

IF NOT, I WONDER WHY? Maybe you are not believing....trusting...Faith, YOU SEE.  
When you believe God's promises you will see God work in your life.

(4F) Number four, it says they shut the mouths of lions. Now, this could refer to three possibilities in the O.T. It could refer to Samson. Samson did that. Not in his own strength as we learn from the story of Samson. God gave him the ability. It could refer to David. David as a shepherd boy shew a lion. Well, I will tell you one thing. It was his size. David was a half pint. It wasn't ability. His brothers laughed at him. It was God working in that little boys life.

Or it could be Daniel. Daniel who found himself in a den of lions and his faith in God's Word prevented those lions from eating him.

How were these men able to shut the mouths of lions? By faith..by believing God's Word. ....I wonder how we would respond. God says to you, "Hay, we are going to have a terrific day, today. I am just going to bless your life. I tell you, you are going to have more blessing than you have every dreamed about. I am going to have you thrown in the lions den....TERRIFIC....PRAISE THE LORD....

We laugh at that. But that is ~~that~~ exactly what happened. These men went by faith believing that God could take care of them. And even if they lost their lives they knew that was a part of God's plan because they didn't believe that this life was the only hope there is. Half of our problem is that we are so pressured to believe that that this life is all there is...There is no more.

And the world says that life after death is all make believe. And we prove that by the way we live.....We are obsessed with the things of this life.....And I don't need to tell you that. I am pointing a finger at myself more than anyone else.

( We are all part of this false world philosophy. And we need to remind ourselves once in awhile that our hope and trust is in God who make heaven and earth.

And God wants us to remember that we have a home in heaven. So, he causes suffering so that we might learn to live by faith, not trusting the things of the world which pass away... But making our lives, now, for eternity.

(5F) Number five, it says they quenched the power of fire." That is probable referring to Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego, the three Hebrew children, friends of Daniel, who were thrown in the fiery furnace. And you must admit that wouldn't be so great today, either. I am going to put you in a furnace of fire. But don't worry...You know, that is the most fascinating story....They were men just like us. Now, how can they come and tell the guards, You don't have to throw us in the furnace, we will just walk right in ourselves. HOW CAN YOU DO THAT??? Only one way... If you know that you are trusting in the Lord, that's all....Unbelievable. In fact the average person can't identify with it, so they just write it off as never happening. Or they call it a parable...

No, it happened. These are historical events that happened.

(6F) Number six, they escaped the edge of the sword. This could refer to a lot of people. They escaped the edge of the sword. How? By Faith. Believing that God would do it.

(7F) Number 7, from weakness were made strong. A good example is David. David, a little boy able to kill Goliath. Maybe it is referring to Elijah who prayed that it might not rain and it didn't for three years and six months. And he prayed again and the sky poured forth rain. Was David or Elijah any different than you and me. The Bible says NO James 5 says that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. How did these people experience these things? FAITH...There isn't any other way, WHY DON'T WE EXPERIENCE THINGS LIKE THIS IN OUR LIVES? WHY DON'T WE CONQUER THE TRIALS OF OUR LIVES? Why don't we have courage in the face of testing? WHY? NO FAITH...No confidence in God...No trust in him....

(8F) Number 8 ~~is~~ they become mighty in war. How do you become strong? The point is that they were weak. How did they become strong? Answer again: Through faith which is the beginning word of Vs 33.



Through faith they did all these things.

(9F) And number 9, they put to flight the foreign armies.

(2D) Now, in Verse 35 we have a little change. These nine deeds explain the victories of certain men of the O.T. But in Vs 35 we learn that not only these testimonies of victory, but we learn about trust in the resurrection. Vs 35: "Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their ~~release~~ redemption, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection."

(1E) Now, we can see this trust in two ways. First, in <sup>Examples</sup> experiences of the resurrection of the O.T. I know of two examples. I Kings 17 talks about the widows Son of Zarephath who died was raised from the dead by Elijah the prophet. And also the Shoedemite woman whose son was raised by Elisha in 2 Kings 4. These are Just two examples. So, I can look at this trust in the Resurrection, first at all in the examples of the O.T. There were two of them.

(2E) But secondly, according to this verse I can see trust in the resurrection in the experiences of torture. Torture that people went through knowing that there was a resurrection.

Look at Vs 35 "And others were tortured, not accepting their ~~redemption~~ <sup>release</sup>---KJ says deliverance and NAS says "release" but ~~both these words are not strong enough.~~ It is the word "redemption."  
In other words, these people were not asking for release from torture. WHY? Because they knew there was a better redemption waiting for them. You see, they were being ask to ~~deny~~ deny their faith. But confidence in the resurrection and assurance of God's promises gave them the courage to endure torture.

(3D) Vs 36 we notice some of the trials of persecution, under which Jewish believers suffered. I would like you to notice several things.

(1E) Fisrt of all, as to the character of those trials.

(1F) First, in terms of personal suffering. Vs 36 says "others experienced mockings and scourgings."

8 Many of the men of the O.T. were mocked. In fact all of the prophets were mocked by people.

By the way, as we go along in this study I hope you are not forgetting to apply it to yourself. You see, isn't it funny ~~th~~ how one little hinderance to the Gospel message cause us to say: Well, I am not going to stick my neck out again." When these men were tortured to death for their faith in Jesus Christ. WHAT IS WRONG WITH US? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SPIRITUAL BACK BONE IN CHRISTIANS? Why is it that we are not effective in our witness anymore? Is it because we are afraid.? Are we afraid of what people might say or do? That we might lose popularity among our friends, our job our position? HAVE WE COME SO FARE IN FEAR THAT WE ARE SILENT BELIEVERS?

The Bible teaches that you might have to suffer personally for your faith. Will it stand the test?

(2F) Secondly, not only Personal suffering, but also in terms of imprisonment. They were in chains and thrown into prison because of their faith. Paul is reminding us, who are not suffering, ~~that~~ others going before us suffered severely.

(3F) Also, in terms of Death. Look at Vs 37: "They were stoned, they were sawn in two --- how about that form of death? they were put to death with the sword....."

As you listen to all of this, you may feel as I did in studying it..MUST WE GO ON...Don't you realize ~~why~~ there is a reason why the ~~w~~ Holy Spirit has all of this here?

Can we read this lightly and say, All that is in the past. It doesn't apply to me...Oh, no..the writer goes on into chapter 12 and he is going to show us that ~~it was~~ God's plan for the believer is to suffer. And it is for our good. Every last bit of it.

(4F) Finally, as to the character of these trials we learn Vs 37 that it caused people to be destitute. Vs 37: "They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated." So they were destitute, ~~being without food and clothing~~. Vs 38 says they had no homes. They lived in the deserts, mountains, caves and holes in the ground.

Read that passage several times when you go to the comfort of your own homes and remember that many, many of God's people never had a home to live in. The Character of those trials. It cause one to say Thank you Lord for my circumstances. Thank you Lord.

(2E) Well, let's get down to the matter of the consequences for them and for us. Vs 39-40

Now, what is the punch line of this whole passage? All this long history of suffering, what is the reason?

Vs 39 ~~says~~ - 40 says(read) That is an interesting passage.

Two thoughts.

(1F) First of all, the consequences in relation to the promise of the Messiah. Vs 39 says "all these having gained approval" It means that they were shown to be men of faith because they were tested and they still stood by their faith alone. But it says that they never *experienced* "THE Promise"...Meaning the Messiah.. In others words they went through all of this suffering with only the belief that Christ was to come...They never saw his first coming...They didn't have the N.T. Yet, they still believed God...WHY DOES THE BIBLE RECOUNT ALL OF THIS FOR US????? Because they had far less evidence to believe than we do today.....

And it was the suffering and testing that they were under which proved their confidence and trust was in God.. Even though they died and never saw the Messiah. Yet, they had faith in what God promised them.

Doesn't it sort of make you feel a little guilty? A little test or problem comes our way, and we want to throw in the towel. Why me Lord.. Why me...

(2F) And secondly, in relation to the plan of God Vs 40 says "God had provided, meaning "Foreseen" God foreseen something better for us so that apart from us <sup>(Mr. Jonathan)</sup> they ( meaning O.T. believers) should ~~not~~ be made perfect (meaning, complete).

Do you understand what God is doing? Let me show you.. From the time ~~of / / / / /~~ that God gave the promise to Abraham he saw that not only Jews would be saved but also Gentles from all corners of the world. People from all over the world would be drawn to Jesus. It was never God's plan that only the Jews be saved. His plan was for all people. He desires that non should perish, no one one.

And so, with the O.T. believers and the N.T. believers (of which we are part) he makes complete ~~his~~ total plan. ~~They~~ They are made perfect in the sense of being complete, finalized. God has many people that he is bring to himself.

We could ask the same question, today. Why hasn't Christ come back? Because the door of opportunity is still open. He still wants to bring more people to himself.

The Bible says that he wants to bring many sons into glory. And he desires that non should perish but that all would come to repentence. And all who will repent will come to him. I will tell you that. And perhaps you are one of those whom he wants. Would you come to Christ tonight?

Let's close with a word of Prayer