

Something Better for Us (Hebrews 11:32–40)
By Pastor Jeff Alexander (9/24/2017)

Introduction

1. Reminder: the MAIN THEME of Hebrews is the superiority of Christianity over Judaism.
 - a. Chapter 11 demonstrates the work of God in the faith of OT saints in a very imperfect system.
 - b. The question that remains is why these OT saints did not receive what they were promised—that they should be made perfect.
 - c. The answer is set forth in vv. 39, 40: the fulfillment of these promises includes NT saints as well.
2. Examining vv. 39 and 40, we need to ask—
 - a. What does the “the promise” refer to?
 - b. In what sense is “the promise” not fulfilled to OT saints?
 - c. What are the “better things” God provided for us NT believers?
 - d. What does “be made perfect” mean?
3. The goal or aim of God’s redemptive process is that all believers should be made *perfect—teleioo*, “to carry through completely, to accomplish, finish, bring to an end” (10:14).
 - a. The OT segment of this redemptive process was temporary and incomplete (7:11, 19; 10:1).
 - b. However, the OT redemptive process was necessary for the coming of Jesus Christ and His being made perfect (2:10; 5:9; 7:28).
 - c. Thus, what Judaism could not do, Jesus does (5:9).
4. Chapter 11 is designed to encourage NT believers because they received approval or commendation through their faith even though they did not receive the promise.
 - a. The promise, then, was their “being made perfect.”
 - b. Their faith and works were necessary to prepare for Jesus’ coming—the “better thing.”

I. A Powerful Lineup

1. Paul’s lineup of OT examples of faith is extensive but far from complete.
 - a. Having briefly expounded on pre-Israelite, patriarchal, and pre-kingdom saints (12 in number), he turns to summarize the remainder of the OT period (vv. 32–38).
 - b. That summary begins with seven additional names listed without explanation (12 is governmental perfection, and 7 is perfection of completeness).
2. These names address two periods—the period of the Judges and the kingdom period.
 - a. The period of the Judges
 - 1) The judges governed Israel under what should have been the ideal—a period when God was king and His law governed the people settling the good land that God had given them.
 - 2) Tragically, that period is regarded as the Dark Ages of Israel’s history because “*everyone did what was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 21:25).
 - 3) Judges 2:6 and 10 give us the sad summary:
 - a) The tribes failed to possess fully the territory that was allotted to them (Judges 1:27–36; “*did not drive out*” is used of 6 of the 12 tribes).
 - b) The people did evil, served Baals, abandoned the Lord, and provoked His anger (Judges 2:11–15).
 - c) The judges were those whom God raised up after He judged the people in order to deliver the nation when they cried out for mercy (Judges 2:16–23; there were 7 cycles of judgment in Judges).
 - b. The period of the kingdom
 - 1) The failure of the period of Judges led the people to demand a king “like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:20).

- 2) They rejected Yahweh from being their God; why would they not also reject His rule over them (1 Sam. 8:6–9)?
- 3) Samuel, Israel’s last judge, was also a prophet (prophets were God’s watch dogs of the kingdom) who anointed both Saul (Israel’s choice and first king) and David (God’s choice and ideal king).
3. These periods in Israel’s history point to the eternal kingdom of David’s greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That kingdom will not fail because, through Christ, the people are changed in heart to worship the Lord God only, to obey perfectly King Jesus, and to possess their inheritance completely.

II. A Conquering Faith

1. Although Israel on the whole failed miserably, some by faith—
 - a. Conquered kingdoms (Joshua)
 - b. Enforced justice (the Judges)
 - c. Obtained promises (Hannah)
 - d. Stopped the mouths of lions (Daniel)
 - e. Quenched the power of fire (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)
 - f. Escaped the edges of the sword (Elijah from Jezebel)
 - g. Became strong out of weakness and was mighty in battle (Gideon)
 - h. Put foreign invaders to flight (Gideon’s 300)
 - i. Received their dead back to life (Elijah’s hostess and Elisha’s Shunammite benefactor).
2. What we must learn here is that we are at war, and God grants faith to prepare us for spiritual conquest.
 - a. We must know what is expected of us (Heb. 4:12).
 - b. We must overcome our own weaknesses through His strength (Eph. 6:10).
 - c. We must fight the good fight of faith, filled with the Spirit (1 Tim. 6:12).
 - d. We must trust fully in the guidance, protection, and preservation of the Lord (Psa. 91).

III. A Suffering Faith

1. While some in faith were victorious, others, by faith, suffered.
 - a. Accepting torture for a better resurrection (2 Macc. 7:23, 29)
 - b. Accepting mocking, flogging, and imprisonment (2 Macc. 7:7)
 - c. Being sawn in two (*The Martyrdom of Isaiah* 5:1ff)
 - d. While some escaped “*the edges of the sword*” (v. 34), others were slain by the sword.
 - e. Some were destitute, afflicted, and mistreated in such a way that they were deprived of the ordinary comforts of life.
2. Suffering is the choice of a sovereign God for a class of saints (martyrs—witnesses) to demonstrate to this vile world that something vastly more glorious awaits these faithful witnesses “*of whom the world is not worthy*” (v. 38; Rev. 7:13–17).

Application

1. While we enjoy the inward spiritual benefits of Christ’s perfecting work, we still battle the flesh, waiting for the day that we are transformed bodily into His likeness.
2. Until then, we, like our brothers of ancient Israel, are to follow Jesus into the ongoing battle for truth and righteousness.
3. Like them of old, we, too, will be chosen by our sovereign Lord to fight valiantly, either winning our battles or suffering honorably to the glory of God.