

What Kind of Victory Does Faith Bring?

[Hebrews 11:29-40](#)

Hebrews, Day 44

By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

- Hebrews 11:29-40, ESV

We love the *Torchlighters* video series, produced by the Christian History Institute and the Voice of the Martyrs. One of the most powerful videos in this series tells the story of Jim Elliot. The 30-minute animated story of Jim Elliot's life and death features two compelling and seemingly contradictory scenes: Jim singing joyously, "Faith is the victory that overcomes the world!" and then Jim lying face down in a river of his own blood, having been speared to death by the very people he hoped to reach with the Gospel.

"Faith is the Victory!" is a stirring hymn based on 1 John 5:4, but it's also the hymn that comes to mind when I read today's passage in Hebrews 11. This closing section of Hebrews 11 tells us of a rapid-fire succession of people who all personally experienced the truth of 1 John 5:4: "*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*"

These verses tell some of the most powerful and encouraging stories of the Old Testament heroes of the faith: Rahab, who hid the spies; Gideon, who chased an army of over 130,000 Midianites with only 300 men; and Daniel, who safely emerged from the lion's den with the praises of God on his lips. It also recalls more problematic people of faith: Jephthah, who sacrificed his daughter to keep a vow he made to the LORD; Samson, whose sin with Delilah was his undoing, and whose redemption came only in his death; and Barak, who was too scared to go to battle until Deborah chided him.

Then, Hebrews 11 makes a very unexpected turn in, right in the middle of verse 35: "*Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.*" Wait! How can the victory of faith be seen in being tortured to death? Hebrews 11 goes on to talk about chains, imprisonment, mocking, flogging, destitution, wilderness wandering, and a bunch of other stuff no one would willingly sign up to receive. Few people would describe verses 35-38 as victory. But they are!

Here's the truth: God is not a cosmic ATM, and faith is not the PIN to tap into His glorious riches at our command! He is God. We are not in command of Him; He is in command of us. We do not get

secret access to order the universe and our lives according to our plan. Faith comes to God and willingly submits our lives to His plan.

The glorious reality of this truth is that God's ways are indeed better than ours, and what faith gives us is a victory far more powerful than what we would order up from life's menu on our own. We would want health, wealth, power, prestige, and pleasure - all of which are fading and none of which truly satisfy our souls. God instead gives us forgiveness of our sins, a perfect righteousness, victory over death, and eternity with Him.

So, what kind of victory does faith bring? The only victory that is stronger than death, that can see being sawn in two as a win - eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord! By faith in Christ, our life is joined to His life and our life is made as inextinguishable and unconquerable as His life is and will always be! This is the reward which the Old Testament saints did not receive, because they were living in the days before Jesus' resurrection, but they will receive it together with us on the last day. And this victory - over sin and death and hell forever - is victory indeed!