

THE RESULTS OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:32-40

The Faith Chapter

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. There's a popular get-to-know-you game that people like to play called "Two Truths and a Lie." You share two things that are true and one thing that is a lie about yourself. Then the group tries to guess. If they get it right, you're out. If you fool them, then you get to stay in the game. For example, I'm 6'4, I wear a size 15 shoe, and I have seven children. Do you know where I lied? I only have six children.
2. Today we are going to play a similar game. But instead of two truths and a lie, we're going to play "a truth and a lie."
3. Today we're going to wrap up our sermon series on "The Faith Chapter" by talking about the results of faith. Thus far the focus of the chapter has been on what faith is, and what faith does. Today we are going to learn to results of faith. What happens when you live a life of faith? The text is going to explain a truth and expose a lie. It is going to explain the true result of faith, and expose the false result of faith.

II. TEXT: Hebrews 11:32-35a

1. **Hebrews 11:32-35a** "32 And what more can I say? Time is too short for me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets, 33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the raging of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength in weakness, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received their dead, raised to life again."

III. THE TRUTH

1. So far in this chapter the author of Hebrews has explained and illustrated faith by telling the stories of the Old Testament heroes. But there's not enough time to tell all the stories – those of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. So he skips their stories and then he jumps to the results of faith. By faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength in weakness, became mighty in battle, put foreign armies to flight, and received their dead raise to life again.
2. What is he saying?
3. Faith enables you to do what you cannot do in your own strength.
4. When you live by faith, God's power moves in and through and around you, enabling you to do what you can't do by yourself; sometimes enabling you to do the impossible.
5. Let's just take the first example, the story of Gideon. The Israelites were under the control of the Midianites, and they were being oppressed. They wouldn't let the

Israelites plant crops, or raise livestock. The Israelites were living in poverty. It was so bad that the Israelites were hiding in mountains and caves. So the Lord called Gideon to deliver the Israelites from Midian, and Gideon began to raise an army. But the Lord told Gideon, "Your army is too big. If you defeat the Midianites with this army, I won't get the credit." And the Lord told Gideon to get rid of some troops. He said, "Tell the troops that whoever is afraid can leave." Twenty-two thousand left, and ten thousand remained. The Lord said the army was still too big. He told Gideon, "Take the men to the water and let them drink. Whoever gets down and drinks like a dog, send them home. Whoever kneels down to drink, keep him." Nine-thousand-seven-hundred men were sent home. Gideon was left with an army of three hundred men. Guess how many soldiers were in the Midianite army? One-hundred-thirty-five thousand. At night, the three hundred soldiers quietly surrounded the enemy camp. Each man had a trumpet, and a lamp that was hidden in an empty pitcher. When Gideon gave the signal, all the men blow their horns, broke the pitchers to the lamps could be seen, and shouted, "For the Lord and for Gideon!" The Midianite soldiers were so terrified that they began to run, and cry out, and they started killing each other. Gideon and his men pursued them until they were all dead. By faith, Gideon and his army of three hundred defeated the Midianite army of one-hundred-thirty-five-thousand. By faith, Gideon did what he could not do in his own strength. By faith, Gideon God's power moved in and through Gideon, enabling him to do the impossible.

6. This is the result of faith. Faith enables you to do what you cannot do in your own strength. When you live by faith, God's power moves in and through you, enabling you to do the impossible, the supernatural, the inexplicable.
7. When you live by faith, other people will look at your life and say, "How did you do it? How did you endure such trials? How did you reach that person? How did you accomplish so much? How did you live on such a small income? How did you raise that much money? How did you raise such great kids? How did you build such a great marriage? How did you keep your faith through such a storm? How did you resist such a great temptation?"
8. Would you like to experience God's power? Would you like to accomplish more than you can accomplish on your own strength? Would like for God to do the impossible through you? Would you like to experience the supernatural? Then you need faith. That's the result of faith.
9. Now what do I mean by faith? Let's do a quick review. Hebrews 11 tells us what faith is, and what faith does. What is faith? Faith is confidence in God, that He is who He says He is, and that He will do what He says He will do. What does faith do? In a nutshell, faith obeys no matter what.
10. I heard a story about an old preacher. He had been a pastor for over fifty years. Every year on his birthday his grandson, who was also a pastor, would try to visit him or call him, and ask him this question: "Grandpa, as someone who is turning 78, 83,

85, etc., what is one piece of wisdom that you could share with me?” Every year the answer was the same. Every year. He would quote **Ecclesiastes 12:13 (KJV)**. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

11. That’s what the life of faith looks like. That’s how the person of faith lives. And when you live like that, when you have confidence in God and obey His commandments, the supernatural will break out in your life. God will do things in and through you that you can’t do in your own strength.
12. God wants to do amazing things in your life; things that are unexplainable; things that are supernatural. He wants to reveal Himself to you and glorify Himself through you. He wants to do things in your life that can’t accomplish in your own strength; things that you can’t take credit for. But you have to have faith, and that means living a life of obedience.
13. That’s the true result of faith. Now let’s get to the lie.

IV. TEXT: Hebrews 11:35b-40

1. **Hebrews 11:35b-40** “Other people were tortured, not accepting release, so that they might gain a better resurrection. 36 Others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. 38 The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and on mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. 39 All these were approved through their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us.”

V. THE LIE

1. The first thing to note about this passage is that no names are mentioned. The author has been namedropping all through the chapter, but in this section he mentions no names.
2. We can try to guess at some of these. Scholars believe that some of these refer to biblical stories, and others refer to the days of the Maccabean Revolt.
 - i. The Bible says that the prophet Zechariah was stoned to death by his own people because he told them the truth (2 Chron 24:20-22).
 - ii. According to legend, the prophet Jeremiah was stoned to death in Egypt by his fellow Jews.
 - iii. Legend also tells us that the prophet Isaiah was sawn in half with a wooden sword. King Hezekiah, a godly king, had died. His son Manasseh came to the throne, and he was a wicked king who worshiped idols. He tried to force Isaiah to take part in his idolatry, and when Isaiah refused had him sawn in half.
 - iv. But as I said, the author of Hebrews was likely thinking about the Maccabean Revolt, which happened about 150 years before Christ. If you don’t know

about the Maccabean Revolt, you need to. During the intertestamental period, Alexander the Great conquered Israel. When he died, his kingdom was divided among his generals. The new kingdom over Israel was the Seleucid Empire. Eventually a king named Antiochus IV came to power. He went by the name Epiphanes, which means “god manifest,” but behind his back he was called Epimanes, which means madman. Antiochus wanted to spread Greek culture and religion all over the empire, so he tried to extirpate Judaism. He forbade the observance of the Sabbath and other traditional feasts. All sacrifices to God were banned. He banned the reading and possession of the Bible; all copies were burned. He banned the practice of circumcision. He stole everything of value from the temple, and he rededicated the temple to Zeus. Inspectors were sent throughout the land to enforce these new laws. If any were found disobedient, they were tortured and killed. The Jewish historian **Josephus** wrote that they “underwent great miseries and bitter torments; for they were whipped with rods and their bodies were torn to pieces; they were crucified while they were still alive and breathed; they also strangled those women and their sons whom they had circumcised, as the king appointed, hanging their sons about their necks as if they were upon their crosses. And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed; and those with whom they were found miserably perished also (Antiquities of the Jews, 12:5,4).”

- v. A priest named Eleazar (4 Maccabees 5-7) was brought before Antiochus and ordered to eat pig meat, and he was threatened with the severest punishment if he refused. He did refuse. He said, “We, Antiochus, who are convinced that we live under a divine law, consider no compulsion to be so forcible as obedience to our law.” He said he would not comply with the king’s order, “no, not if you pluck out my eyes and consume my bowels in the fire.” They stripped him naked and scourged him with whips, while a herald stood by him, saying, “Obey the king’s commands.” His flesh was torn off by the whips and he streamed down with blood and his flanks were laid open by wounds. He collapsed and one of the soldiers kicked him violently in the stomach to make him rise. In the end even the guards were moved to wondering compassion. They suggested to him that they would bring him dressed meat which was no pork, and that he should eat it pretending that it was pork. He refused. “We should thus ourselves become an example of impiety to the young, if we became to them an excuse for eating the unclean.” In the end they carried him to the fire and threw him on it, “burning him with cruelly contrived instruments and pouring stinking liquids into his nostrils.” He died, declaring, “I am dying by fiery torments for the law’s sake.”

- vi. Another story is told of a Jewish woman and her seven sons (2 Maccabees 7) who refused to break God's commandments. The seven brothers endured the torture of Antiochus, encouraged by their mother, and were killed, one after the other. After the youngest brother refused to disobey God, they killed him and his mother.
 - vii. In the village of Modin about 17 miles NW of Jerusalem there was a devout Jewish priest named Mattathias who had five sons. Antiochus sent his officers to the village to force the people to offer sacrifices to the Greek gods. They tried to persuade Mattathias to do it since the whole town respected him, but he refused. When another Jewish man decided to obey the order and was about to offer a sacrifice to the Greek gods, Mattathias killed him, and then he killed the king's official. War broke out, and Mattathias soon died. His son Judas Maccabees, or "the hammer," became the leader, and he helped the Jews win back their independence and freedom of religion. This was in December of 164 BC. They rededicated the temple to God. The Hebrew word for dedication is Hanukkah, and that's the name of the festival of lights that is celebrated every year by the Jews in December.
 - viii. So, the first thing to notice is that the author of Hebrews doesn't mention any names. The reader has to fill them in. And that's not hard to do because there are plenty of examples of godly people through the centuries who have suffered.
3. The second thing to note is that the people in this passage all had negative experiences: they were mocked, scourged (whipped), imprisoned, stoned to death, sawed in two, killed with the sword, wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute (extreme poverty), afflicted, mistreated, wandered in deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. These people all experienced terrible things.
 4. The third thing to notice is that these people all had faith. This is not about people who lacked faith. This is about people who had faith. It's not saying that people who have faith experience the supernatural power of God, but the people who don't have faith suffer terrible things. It's saying that many people who had great faith suffered terribly.
 5. This passage is exposing a great lie about faith. The lie is that the more faith you have, the more you will experience health, wealth, and prosperity. The lie is that the more faith you have, the more you will experience a life of ease and comfort.
 6. This lie is extremely seductive when it comes from a celebrity preacher who has reached the pinnacle of success in his particular field. He is a best-selling author. His church is massive. He is invited to speak all over the world. He makes big bucks and lives in a mansion and drives a fancy car. And then he stands up and basically says, "I have all this because of my great faith. And if you will have great faith, then you can have all this too."

7. No. That's a lie. The pastor has all that stuff because he is extremely talented. He's a gifted leader and communicator. And because of his skill and talent, he has amassed great wealth. But there's a problem with his claim: First, this passage (and many others) explains that faith doesn't always result in health, wealth, and prosperity. Faith often results in great pain and hardship. Second, there are many people who have health, wealth, and prosperity who don't have any faith at all.
8. You cannot look at a person's level of health and income and make a conclusion about how much faith they have. It doesn't work.
9. A few years ago I got into a heated argument with another pastor about this very topic. He was a bi-vocational pastor who also worked as a driver for FedEx. He said that if you have enough faith, you can write your own ticket; you can create your own reality. God wants you to be healthy and prosperous, and if you have faith, you can speak those things into existence. I argued from Scripture. I said, "What about 2 Timothy 3:12, 'all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted'? And what about John 16:33, 'In this world you will have trouble'? What about John the Baptist, who was beheaded? What about Stephen who was stoned to death? What about Paul who lived a life of suffering and hardship and poverty as a missionary in the first century? What about Jesus Himself, who was rejected by His own people, falsely accused of terrible things, and unjustly condemned to die on the cross?" Then I argued from history. I said, "What about the twelve apostles? Eleven of the twelve were murdered. Did they not have enough faith? Haven't you read Christian history? Haven't you read the biographies of the great Christian men and women throughout history? Theirs weren't lives of ease and comfort, health and prosperity, but hardship and suffering. But in the midst of their trials, they never lost the faith, and they God did amazing things, supernatural things in and through them." He continued to argue with me about it. Shortly after this, it may have been a week or so, there was a huge commotion in the warehouse. Ambulance, paramedics, police officers. I can't remember exactly what happened, if it was a heart attack, or a heat stroke, but my pastor friend almost died. They were able to save his life, but I couldn't help but say to myself, "I guess he didn't have enough faith."
10. The truth of Hebrews 11 is that faith results in supernatural living. God will do things in and through you that you can't do in your own strength. The lie is that faith does not result in health and prosperity.
11. If you experience a season of health and prosperity, give the glory to God. Praise the Lord. Thank Him for His goodness, and enjoy it. But don't conclude that God is rewarding you for your great faith. Wicked people also experience seasons of health and prosperity. Don't conclude that in order to sustain the health and wealth you have can't let your faith waver. That's not how God works.

12. And if you are experiencing times of difficulty, times of suffering, don't conclude that it must be because you don't have enough faith. Remember Jesus. Remember Paul. Remember John the Baptist. Remember Hebrews 11.
13. Faith is not the ability to call into existence health and prosperity. Faith is trusting and serving and obeying God no matter how hard life gets.

VI. CONCLUSION

1. So let's play "A truth and a Lie." What are the results of faith?
2. The truth: Faith enables you to do what you cannot do in your own strength. Because God works in and through your life. Faith results in supernatural living.
3. The lie: Faith results in health and prosperity.
4. Remember what **Hebrews 11:10** says about Abraham. "For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." Abraham was not looking forward to earthly rewards for his faith; that isn't promised to us. He was looking forward to the eternal rewards that all people of faith will receive in heaven. Health and prosperity are promised to us in heaven, not on earth.