

27. Understanding the Faith of Others in the Old Testament

In our last topic, we saw some of the things that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand about the faith of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, the parents of Moses, and Moses. We saw that Moses chose to suffer with the people of God rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. In this topic, we are going to be reminded of the faith of many others in the Old Testament.

In Hebrews 11:30-31, we read, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.” Rahab is an example of the faith shown by one who was not a Jew and also one who had a sinful past. Rahab showed her faith in God by hiding the spies, because she recognized that God is the creator of all things. Joshua 2:11-13 says, ““And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.”” Here, we see the faith of Rahab as she recognized that the Lord God of the Jews was the creator of all things.

Rahab also showed her faith by asking the spies to spare her family when Israel conquered the city of Jericho. The rest of her family also had to show their faith by being obedient to the instructions of the spies. Joshua 2:17-19 says, “So the men said to her: ‘We will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home. So it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him.’” Rahab showed her faith in another way when she hung the bright red cord in the window. Her family showed their faith by remaining in the house of Rahab.

We also are given as examples of faith four men from the book of Judges and two men from the books of 1 and 2 Samuel who showed their faith. Then, we have the faith of the prophets mentioned. These people showed their faith in many different ways. Hebrews 11:32-34 tells us, “And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” Throughout the book of Judges, we see that the various people whose faith is mentioned trusted the Lord to give Israel victory over their enemies.

One of the ways that Samuel showed his faith was by calling the people of Israel to repent of their idol worship. 1 Samuel 7:3-5 says, “Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, ‘If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from

among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.’ So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only. And Samuel said, ‘Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.’” Samuel prayed, and the Lord gave Israel a great victory over the Philistines.

One of the ways David showed his faith was by trusting the Lord to judge Saul two different times when David had the opportunity to kill him. 1 Samuel 26:9-12 says, “And David said to Abishai, ‘Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?’ David said furthermore, ‘As the Lord lives, the Lord shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed. But please, take now the spear and the jug of water that are by his head, and let us go.’ So David took the spear and the jug of water by Saul's head, and they got away; and no man saw it or knew it or awoke. For they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen on them.” David knew he could trust God to deal with Saul for Saul’s sin.

Other men of faith in the Old Testament showed their faith in other ways. Daniel saw God close the mouths of lions. The three friends of Daniel were protected in the fiery furnace. Many were protected when others tried to kill them. Hezekiah was about to die and prayed to the Lord to heal him. In addition to giving Hezekiah fifteen additional years to live, Isaiah 38:8 says, “‘Behold, I will bring the shadow on the sundial, which has gone down with the sun on the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward.’ So the sun returned ten degrees on the dial by which it had gone down.” God performed a miracle to confirm His word to Hezekiah.

Hebrews 11:35-36 says, “Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.” God honored the faith of two women by using Elijah and Elisha to raise their dead sons. 1 Kings 17:22-23 says, “Then the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived. And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, ‘See, your son lives!’” God honored the faith of another woman by using Elisha to raise her son back to physical life.

Many others showed their faith by experiencing suffering and death. Some were tortured and killed because of their faith. They were willing to die for their faith because they looked forward to the future resurrection. Jeremiah nearly died in a dungeon when he was let down into the mire at the bottom of the dungeon. Jeremiah 38:6 says, “So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king's son, which was in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.” In the case of Jeremiah, God spared his life, but many of the faithful people of the Old Testament died for their faith.

Hebrews 11:37-40 says, “They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the

promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.” Throughout the Old Testament, many people showed their faith in the resurrection by the fact that they were willing to suffer and die for their faith.

Christ warned the lawyers of his day of their coming judgment because they were committing the same sins that their fathers had committed when their fathers killed the prophets. In Luke 11:49-51, Christ said, “Therefore the wisdom of God also said, “I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,” that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.” This statement about the death of Zechariah is recorded in 2 Chronicles 24:20-21, where we read, “Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said to them, ‘Thus says God: “Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He also has forsaken you.”’ So they conspired against him, and at the command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord.” Here, we see that Zechariah was killed right in the temple court for his obedience to the command of the Lord.

The suffering and death of many people of faith in the Old Testament showed that they trusted the Lord and looked forward to the resurrection. Job gave one of the best summaries of the faith of Old Testament saints when he said, in Job 19:25-27, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” Job and the other Old Testament saints looked forward to the future resurrection because of their faith in the promises of God.

These Old Testament saints looked forward to the promises of God by faith. However, the writer of Hebrews makes it clear that those who lived after the death and resurrection of Christ have something even better, because Hebrews 11:13 says, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” As a result, we are now able to look backward to the death and resurrection of Christ and by faith we can know that Christ has provided eternal life for us. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the great blessing that we have to look back in faith to what Christ did for us through His death and resurrection. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the faith of the Old Testament saints.