

Faith Suffering

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[0:00] I'm going to ask you to take your Bibles and turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 11 and verse 32. And what more shall I say?

I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised, who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword, whose weakness was turned to strength, and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released so that they might gain a better resurrection.

Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned. They were sawed in two.

They were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them.

[1:47] They wandered in deserts and mountains and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.

God had planned something better for us, so that only together with us would they be made perfect. God had planned something better for us, so that only together with us, God had planned something better for us, so that only together with us, God had planned something better for us, so that only together with us, we could have been made perfect. That derogatory term that was used of our Savior by his enemies, and that the Koran uses for followers of our Savior.

And when painted on a house, this letter is saying, Christians live here. And it's meant to warn them to convert to Islam, pay a fine, or face death by the sword.

And sadly, the reality has often been to pay the fine and to still face death by the sword.

[3:48] Are you ready for that? Am I ready for that? God's people have often been marked as sheep for the slaughter.

And I want to encourage you this morning to know that when they have, they have found that faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

Now, we've been making our way through Faith's Hall of Fame for some time now. Our guide has taken us chronologically through the Old Testament history and timeline, starting at creation with righteous Abel, through that pre-flood time, then on in to Abraham, the patriarchs, and right on up to the conquest of the Promised Land under Joshua.

And along the way, he has highlighted many examples of ordinary people who did extraordinary things through faith. And then it's like suddenly it dawns on him that he doesn't have time to continue at this same pace and tell of the others worthy of mention.

He still has 1,400 years to go of the timeline of the Old Testament. And to go on as he has been would stretch his letter such that he could no longer call it a short letter as he does when he signs off.

[5:20] It's kind of like a preacher who's preaching away and then he suddenly realizes that, Oh my, I've got five minutes to say 30 minutes worth of material.

Now, that never happens here. But if it did, what happens? Well, he finds himself out of time and so he quickly draws the conclusion, sums up, and leaves the conclusion.

Now, all of that was under the inspiration of the Spirit. But that's kind of what happens here is he really does say, I don't have time to go on like I've been going. And so he cuts it short, sums up, very brief summary and conclusion.

He's already given us enough real-life examples of what it means to live by faith, to encourage us to do the same. He's already shown us in real life all the different things that faith does.

He's shown us what it means to be sure of those things that we hope for and to be certain of those things that we cannot see. And so he brings it to a conclusion very quickly.

[6:30] He drops six more names without comment and then he gives a machine gun-like summary of all that they have accomplished through faith. So we're going to see faith triumphing and then faith suffering.

First faith triumphing, verses 32 to 34. And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets.

Now, you may not have recognized, but he's still working through the Old Testament rather chronologically, still coming through the timeline, picking up after Joshua and Rahab at the conquest.

The first four names are all men of faith taken from the book of Judges, aren't they? These were judges in Israel. And then David is a sampling of the kings and Samuel is a sampling of the prophets.

And oh, what a shame to have to rush over these and others in their category, other kings and prophets of great faith. All of them noteworthy because of what they did through faith.

[7:38] And so without tying specific names to specific accomplishments, he just leaves the names and then lists a long list of accomplishments.

These who through faith, first of all, conquered kingdoms. Well, Gideon conquered the Midianites. Barak conquered the Canaanites, Sisera, and his 900 iron chariots.

Samson conquered the Philistines, Jephthah the Ammonites, David, many nations, they changed the whole political landscape of their world. And they did so by faith.

Often outnumbered by the enemy, Gideon and his men. Outnumbered by the Midianites, 450 to 1. Means for every Israelite soldier, I would have to kill 450, you would have to kill 450. That was the way they were outnumbered. And so they conquered kingdoms by faith because their faith brought God into the field of battle and no one can withstand him.

[8:50] He showed that by faith, God is able to save, whether by many or by few. They conquered kingdoms. Through faith they administered justice, he goes on to say.

You know, good government is no small gift to any people. And here, good government was given to God's people through Samuel and David.

They ruled the people in righteousness. They punished evil, and they rewarded good. And through faith, they administered justice.

How? Because by faith, they saw the unseen God as the righteous king who was over them. They might have been called king, but they realized there was a king of kings, and he is righteous.

And by faith, they saw him, and therefore, they ruled accordingly. They ruled according to his righteous laws rather than their own whims. And so, by faith, they administered justice.

[9:59] And through faith, they gained what was promised. Many things had been promised, and we're told that not one of all the good promises the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed.

All came to pass. Faith took God at his word and was not disappointed. And received promises who, through faith, shut the mouths of lions.

Kids, do you know anybody that did that? Do you know which prophet it was that shut the mouths of lions? Well, it was Daniel, wasn't it?

In his old age, the command went out that no one was to pray to any god but to bring their request to the king. It was illegal to pray.

And rather than succumb to the world's pressure, Daniel trusted in the unseen god, and three times a day, he bowed down and prayed for help by faith.

[11:03] And so when he was found out and thrown into the den of lions, it was by faith that he shut the lions' mouths. It wasn't that the lions weren't hungry because all those conspiring against Daniel were then thrown in, and they were gobbled up.

No, it was because, as Daniel says to the king in the morning, when the king rushes to the den to see what happened to Daniel, Daniel says to the nervous king, my God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not hurt me.

It was through faith in God that God extended his angels to shut the mouths of the lions. What amazing things have been done through faith who quenched the fury of the flames.

Doesn't that remind you, kids, of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Those three Hebrew young men refusing to bow down and worship the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar when everybody else all around them was bowing down at the sound of the music.

And in a rage, the king threatened to throw them into the fiery furnace if they did not bow. Do you remember those words of faith that came from those three boys? They went ahead and by faith obeyed God's word and refused to be conformed to the world, saying, if we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us.

[12 : 40] And he will rescue us from your hand, O king. Do you see the firmness of their faith in God? God has said, we must worship him alone. And faith took hold of God's word and did not budge.

By faith, they obeyed God and trusted their lives into his hands so that when they were thrown into the fiery furnace, it didn't even singe a hair on their body and their clothing didn't even have the smell of smoke.

They quenched the fury of the flames. How? By faith. Faith. And who through faith escaped the edge of the sword?

Men who were threatened with death by the sword, but who in trusting God escaped what otherwise would have been certain death by the sword.

Now there's many that you can remember from the Old Testament that fit into that category. But certainly David, who is one that's been listed, fits that bill. How many times did he escape the sword of King Saul who sought him for some 12 years with his whole army and all their swords?

[13 : 49] And then there was that sword, that great big sword of Goliath, and he escaped that sword by faith, didn't he? And then there was the sword of so many enemies that he fought all of his life.

How did he escape so many times? By faith, he escaped the edge of the sword. And who through weakness was turned, whose weakness was turned to strength.

Can you think of Old Testament saints whose weakness was turned to strength? Well, Samson's mentioned here, isn't he? And by presumption, he found himself as weak as any other man, didn't he?

He thought, I can just be strong like every other time, but he had violated the Lord's will concerning his hair and so on. And he finds himself as weak as any other man and he's taken captive, his eyes are gouged out, he's made to grind, pull like a beast of burden to grind wheat.

And then he's brought out for sport into the temple of Dagon by these Philistine idolaters. And he's placed between two pillars and there, they're mocking him and they're mocking his God.

[15 : 03] And by faith, Samson prays, Oh Lord, give me strength just this once more. And he who was weak was made strong and he brought down the whole temple as he pushed on the pillars and killed more in his death than he had killed in his life.

Whose weakness was turned to strength. Are you finding strength in the midst of your weakness? Are you finding in things that are too strong for you that there is one who in looking to him comes and strengthens me?

Strengthens me so that when I am weak, I find this strange reality that I'm strong. And it's because by faith we look to him and his strength.

Yes, that was happening all throughout the Old Testament. Samson's just a sampling of many. So let the weak say, I am strong because of what the Lord has done for us and will do.

Others who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. That was surely David's experience. You can read of it in Psalm 18. Just a few selected verses.

[16 : 23] David says, With your help I can advance against a troop. With my God I can scale a wall. He trains my hands for battle. My arms can bend a bow of bronze.

You armed me with strength for battle. You made my adversaries bow at my feet. You made my enemies turn their backs in flight. And I destroyed my foes.

You see, because by faith they believed the battle was the Lord. The Lord showed up and gave them power, made them powerful in battle to rout foreign armies.

And so one chased a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight. Furthermore, women received back their dead, raised to life again.

You think of anybody in the Old Testament? Any women who received back from the dead? those that were raised? Well, it's under the time of the prophets.

[17:28] They're mentioned here, aren't they? Samuel and the prophets. This time the prophet Elijah and that widow of Zarephath whose dead son he raised from the dead.

And the prophet Elisha, after him, by faith, raised the Shunammite woman's dead son. And so these women had their sorrows turned to immediate joy as they received their sons back from death to life.

How did that happen? By faith. That's what he's telling us. All these things happened through faith. And there's so many more to mention whose faith accomplished amazing things, but there's simply no time, he says.

Simply no time. And then suddenly the whole passage shifts gears. And it turns into a different direction right in the middle of verse 35.

Of course, the verses are divisions that have been added since the writer to the Hebrews. But right here in the middle of verse 35, the whole passage turns, doesn't it? So far, all the accomplishments of faith have been happy outcomes, haven't they?

[18:41] Very happy outcomes. The triumphs of faith, we would say. Escaping from the sword. Escaping from lions. From fire. Weakness turned to strength.

Victory in battle. Enemies defeated. Their dead loved ones brought back to life again. All happy outcomes. And also true. Faith triumphing.

But if that's all we remember from Old Testament history, we'll draw a wrong conclusions from these examples of faith. we'll think, as some do, that if we just have enough faith, we too will have all happy outcomes in life.

We'll escape the sufferings of this life. We'll always be lifted up with physical strength and enjoy victories over all our temporal enemies. If only we have faith, this uninterrupted life of happy outcomes will be ours.

There's a lot of that religion being preached this morning in pulpits across our land. Your best life now. And they'll tell you how to get it.

[19:55] As if Jesus came to make life fun and easy. And oh, how disappointed we would be if that's all we heard.

and then the trouble comes in our life. And then we suffer a death and they're not raised. And then we're defeated under one of our enemies.

And we say, I thought, I thought life was to be nothing but triumphs. All fun. All easy. You see, our guide through the Hall of Fame wants to spare us from such disappointment.

And so he reminds us of quite different outcomes of faith. He reminds us in verses 35b through 38 of faith suffering.

Not only triumphing in the way of happy outcomes, but faith suffering. Causing tears and pain and sorrow. And we need to appreciate that what follows are all due to faith just as much as the other things that we've seen.

[21:07] It's all under this list of what people have done through faith in the Old Testament times. Sometimes faith saved them out of trouble and death.

Other times faith led them straight into trouble and death and sustained them in it. That's what he's telling us. And if we're willing to receive it, these are triumphs of faith no less.

to be led into trouble and death and to be sustained in that suffering no less triumphs than to escape them by faith.

Now some of these examples of faith that we're going to see seem to be taken from the books of the Maccabees. And I just want to have a time out for a moment and talk about these eight books of the Maccabees.

They trace the history of Jewish leaders the Maccabees who rebelled against Greek rule. And they cover events happening mainly in the second and third century B.C.

[22:15] It's part of that silent period that we have of 400 years between the Old Testament's end and the beginning of the New Testament. Some 400 years. And the Maccabee, the history of the Maccabees, are eight books that are history books that tell us some of the things that happened during that time.

Now, the Roman Catholics have added two books of Maccabees to their Bible. The Greek Orthodox Bible has included four of their books. But they are simply secular history books.

Not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Not part of sacred scripture. But that doesn't mean that everything in them are lies. For instance, do you believe that George Washington was our first president?

That's not inspired scripture. It's a part of history book. And we accept it as truth. So were these books of the Maccabees.

I'm not saying that everything in them was true. I'm simply saying that what is referred or quoted from them in the Bible was true. And they're quoted as sources of history, of what had happened.

[23 : 28] And biblical writers do that sort of thing from time to time. Not a lot of it, but there are occasional quotes from non-inspired literature. Paul does it on Mars Hill when he quotes one of the Greek poets.

And he says that we are all his offspring, Acts 17, 28. He's quoting a pagan poet. But even pagan poets can say things that are true once in a while.

And he quotes them. And then he quotes one of the Cretans' own prophets in Titus 1, 12. How that prophet realized that his people were lazy gluttons.

And then there are Old Testament books of the kings that quote other lost history books. And it's in the same vein that the writer to the Hebrews here in Hebrews 11 draws on the book of Maccabees to set before us other examples of faith suffering in that whole Old Testament era.

Remember he's moving from creation right up to the coming of Christ. And so he's been coming through judges and kings and prophets and now he's in that intertestamentary period.

[24 : 40] And he's showing us there were people of faith on the earth during those 400 years too. They're not recorded in the Bible but they walked the earth. Now the fact that he quotes them doesn't mean that they should be included in our Bibles but I just want you to understand where these are coming from most likely.

And he begins. Others were tortured. This is the shifting then. We've been seeing all these wonderful outcomes and now the shift and we're going a different direction. Others through faith were tortured and refused to be released.

Now the word here for tortured is a particular kind of torture. It's being stretched out over a rack and then beaten to death with clubs. It's seen in the word itself.

It's the word *timfani*. It's a drum-like structure. You've got a skin stretched over and you beat the drum. That's what they did with some people of faith. And that's precisely the kind of torture given to an old scribe Eliezer during the Maccabean period.

It's found in the second book of Maccabees and it records how he went willingly and unhesitatingly to the rack to be beaten to death rather than to compromise his faith in God.

[25 : 59] And right after the record of his martyrdom in second Maccabees comes the record of a mother and her seven sons who suffered that kind of torture and other forms of torture rather than to disobey God's law.

and all the way through their torture they were upheld by their belief in the resurrection. Under the reign of Antiochus the fourth epiphanies that Daniel refers to not by name but you can read it in Daniel.

He becomes a type of the Antichrist. So enraged was he against the Jews and his persecution. And here was this mother and her seven sons.

Unlike other mothers that we've just heard of in verse 35a this mother did not receive her sons back from the dead. But was rather forced to watch each of her seven sons be tortured to death and then herself as well.

Besides the rack that dislocated the joints there were bone crushing implements thumb screws branding irons scalping mutilation frying boiling all sorts of devilish devices that men devised for the purpose of trying to get believers in God to deny him.

[27 : 19] That's the pressure. That's what all they had to do is deny him or some element of his truth and the torture would end. But this mother and her seven sons would rather be tortured to death than to violate a law of their God.

What enabled them to do that? What is strong enough to overcome what is natural which is to cling to life with everything in us? One thing faith faith that's what it's that's what it's claiming that it has that kind of power faith says yes what's natural is to cling to life at all costs and faith says no no not at all costs faith says some things are better than just more of this life namely a better resurrection did you see that?

That's why they refused to be released so that they might participate in a better resurrection and so they refused to save their skin by denying the truth of God faith had its eye on a better resurrection better than what resurrection?

well he's just talked about the resurrection of these two sons that came back to their mothers and they got to enjoy them a few more years but eventually what happened to those two sons? they died again well this mother and her son were not looking for that kind of resurrection they were looking for a better one you know what they're talking about?

that resurrection unto life eternal when they will receive new bodies no death that was the better resurrection that they were looking forward to it's not as clearly revealed in the Old Testament but this mother and her seven sons fixed their eyes on the dimmer light that they had about the resurrection they had some light and they fixed their faith on it and they found strength given them in the midst of their tortures to not give up trusting in their God it was the belief in the better resurrection and in that account of Maccabees of the seven sons one son after another declares his willingness to accept torture and death because of his belief in the resurrection one said to the king you dismiss us from this present life but the king of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life another held out his limbs to be mutilated and said

[30:06] I got these from heaven and because of his laws I disdained them and from him I hope to get them back again back again another at the point of death said one cannot but choose to die at the hands of men and to cherish the hope that God gives of being raised again by him but for you king there will be no resurrection to life and as all this is happening the king is telling the mother to encourage her sons to save themselves by denying the faith and instead this mother by faith exhorts her sons to suffer and to die without flinching the creator of the world she says who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again and the youngest one his turn came to suffer and died confidently testified of his faith to

Antiochus the king that his brothers all now did after enduring their brief pain now drink of ever flowing life by virtue of God's covenant you see by faith by faith by faith they were tortured refusing to be released so that they might gain a better resurrection by faith some escaped death by faith others persevered in torture and death some faced jeers and flogging while others were chained and put in prison verse 36 tradition has it the prophet jeremiah was beaten and put in stocks and made no that's found in jeremiah 20 that he was beaten and put in stocks and made a laughing stock he was later beaten and put in prison and then thrown down into that muddy cistern remember reading of that in jeremiah 38 and why is he down there why is this prophet down in that muddy cistern sinking about to suffocate why is he there about to starve he's there because faith is upholding him to not abandon his god out of the pressures to conform to the world he would not compromise god's word but preached it faithfully some faced jeers and flogging chains in prison they were stoned

I wonder who he's talking about here it is tradition that jeremiah was stoned by his own people in egypt for continuing to preach against their idolatry but you know the jews stoned so many of their prophets and killed so many of them that it's hard to know which ones are being referred to here remember what jesus said as he approached jerusalem jerusalem jerusalem you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you that's the way you thank those men that that god sent to you to turn every one of you from your sins and away from hell and you thank them with stones by faith they were stoned when they took the first hit from the stone they didn't give up why not faith faith led them into the persecution faith upheld them in the persecution they were sawed in two that's what tradition has the jews doing because they were so irritated at isaiah's preaching that they sawed him in two with a wooden saw under wicked king manassas reign they were put to death by the sword we read of some through faith who escaped the edge of the sword back in verse 34 but here we read of others who were put to death by the sword even beheaded

Elijah Elijah escaped the sword of Jezebel but many other prophets of the Lord did not they were put to the sword verse kings 19 Daniel speaks of many godly Jews who would fall by the sword and be burned which indeed took place under Antiochus Epiphanes all because of faith that's what he's saying these people of faith saw what others could not see the invisible god they lived for a kingdom that is not of this world they held to kingdom values and truths that were countercultural and their faith based lives and actions stirred the rage of unbelievers because men hate the light that exposes their darkness and when believers refused to conform to the rest of the unbelieving society they chased them out of their society they outlawed them they exiled them forcing them to flee for their lives like hunted prey and so we have they went about in sheepskins and goatskins destitute persecuted and mistreated that's poverty no better clothes than rough animal hides just to

keep them warm they wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground deserted places where no one would find them remember the hundred prophets that Obadiah kept alive in two caves during the reign of wicked

Ahab and Jezebel there they are they're living in caves holes in the ground why is that man down in that hole in the ground because of faith why doesn't he just deny the faith and live in the palaces with everybody or live in their other homes because of his faith darkness darkness doesn't want the light they say we have no room for you and if you won't conform to us then you're not worthy to live but God has a different opinion and he expresses it here the world was not worthy of them he says let's get it straight who's not worthy of who the world treats its best like the worst and says you're not worthy of us and cast out their names and their persons into deserted places and God says the world was not worthy of them they're the precious ones they're the ones who are like gold how that would warm the hearts of the original readers of this book who are starting to be persecuted now for their faith these

[36 : 45] Hebrew Christians and they read of these who are cast out as nobodies to be hunted down and yet that God viewed them in such high esteem that the world was not worthy of them now there's encouragement then for all who suffer for their faith the facts are these sufferings are real for many believers living in a fallen world that hates our Christ his laws and his gospel so let us not consider it something strange if we should be evil treated for our faith in God and his word you know the very first example of faith given in the Hebrews 11 hall of fame is a martyr for the faith Abel killed by his own brother now as we come to the end we got all kinds of them mentioned and oh yes let's not forget our Lord who lived a perfect life in this same world and they mocked and tortured him on a perpendicular rack of torture called a cross where he was wounded for our transgressions yes that's that's all part of what faith holds us up to endure these Old

Testament saints suffered not because of a lack of faith but due to its presence due to its power their faith brought them into these sufferings and their faith enabled them to bear up under suffering rather than denying God to have an easier life that's the power of faith and we're meant to be encouraged by that we're meant to prepare ourselves that if we are going to be prepared for suffering for Christ and not conforming to the world we are going to have to be armed with faith no less than these who've gone before us so some escaped suffering others were held up to suffer and die same faith laid hold of the same God who strengthened his servants well you say who gets which who gets to have faith escape and who gets to have faith lead us and hold us up under suffering well that's

God's prerogative isn't it isn't it not what he told Peter I've chosen that you will glorify me by way of death violent death and Peter says well what about him Lord John he says what about him what does it matter whether he lives till I come back and never dies you follow me you see that's what counts God is the one who determines which it shall be shall we be called by faith to suffer for him or shall we be called by faith to escape the important thing is that we be faithful full of faith whatever the cost and so the concluding lessons verses 39 and 40 these were all commended for their faith yet none of them received what had been promised God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect all of these hall of famers were honored by God for one thing for their faith their faith trusting in God and his word yet not one of them received what he had been promised now earlier he did say they obtained things promised particular individual things that God had promised but this is saying that none of these in the faith hall of fame received the thing that had been promised and it's a reference to the full salvation that would come to them through the coming

Messiah they lived before Messiah had come and they had not received the promised full salvation that he would bring a salvation that included the better resurrection of the body in a better country of a new heaven and a new earth the home of righteousness where everything is made completely new they never saw that these great men and women of faith as verse 13 tells us they had to live their whole lives by faith and were still living by faith when they died why because Jesus hadn't come yet either the first time nor the second time to bring in perfection and so they did not receive the things promised they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance and admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth and they died looking forward to that final perfection that would one day come for them under Messiah's reign and the lesson is that we who live after the coming of Christ are no different on this score not at all even though Christ has come and lived and died and risen and ascended there are still aspects of our salvation that are yet future promises still

unfulfilled as much as for the Old Testament saints namely that better resurrection we're still looking forward to that they died in the hope of that and there are still sufferings and persecutions for believers until the end of this age that will need the same faith in that better resurrection to sustain us to keep us from denying Christ it was to the Hebrew Christians about to suffer those three centuries of Roman persecution that this letter came and their faith is being strengthened to be like their forebears who've gone before them and to trust in God for the better resurrection in a better country of a new heaven and a new earth with better and lasting possessions when at the return of Christ we will finally be perfected forever in other words he's saying to us as good as our present relationship is with

[43:12] Christ God has planned something even better for us when together with the Old Testament saints we will be made perfect in a perfect new world they're not going to get that before us not one day before us we're going to be perfected together we'll enter our final perfected state together in step with Adam and Noah and David and Abraham together that's the better thing that we would all be perfected together at the same time until then we're going to need this same faith to lay hold of these unseen realities this coming better resurrection and that is a faith that will serve us through any suffering that may come our way for the sake of Christ well these have gone before us and they glorify God in their day how by living by faith still living by faith when they died they died by faith what were they looking for they were looking for

Messiah to come and to perfect them and their world forever and ever that's how we must live and that's how we must die and we have the same faithful God that they leaned on we have the same promises that they leaned on and far more promises than they ever had oh the resurrection the better resurrection just dimly revealed there were texts there were places but oh Jesus has come and he's destroyed death and he's brought life and immortality to light through the gospel we have the Messiah now who has come who has entered into death and has come out the other side victorious over it and who now says to us be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life what promises we have that those Old Testament saints never had Calvin says they had but a spark of light we have the son of righteousness shining on us so there's two stakes driven into the sea in Scotland one further out and one further in the tide is out that allows them to drive the stakes and then they take the two Margaret who had their faith in the

Lord Jesus and were not going to compromise and call the king the head of the church and so the old Margaret 80 something years old is tied to the stake furthest out and the 18 year old Margaret is tied to the stake further in and they are told that any time they are willing to acknowledge the king as the head of the church that they will be untied from their stake and now the waters start coming in and of course they engulfed the old Margaret first and the soldiers are saying what now young Margaret what do you think of her now ready to recant and she holds fast to her Bible to her Lord she sings the 24th Psalm that she had memorized and then she opens her

Bible for the last time to Romans chapter 8 and she says we are more than conquerors through him who loved us so and I am convinced I am persuaded that nothing neither death nor life and she reads can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord death will separate me from this body now but I'm looking to be with my Lord and I'm looking for a new resurrection that he will bring a better resurrection and that hope in the better resurrection sustained her to give her life and to be faithful unto death dear Christian I say when I read these accounts and I read Hebrews 11 as it ends I feel like a spiritual pygmy what have I suffered what could I suffer what would I suffer to remain true to the

Savior to his truths to not be ashamed of him or his word and oh I thank God for Hebrews chapter 11 that tells us there is a faith that lays hold of a God in heaven that will enable a man a woman a boy or a girl to glorify God in all sorts of different ways just by being true to him and his word and I have hope I have hope again you see it's not something in that Margaret it's not something in this Margaret it's not something in this Samson this David this Abraham these were ordinary people like you and me Elijah man of like passions as we are but they had an extraordinary God who had made promises to them and he was so faithful to them that they cast their whole weight upon him and found him sufficient to do things that they otherwise never would do to remain tied to the stake for him may the

[48:59] Lord make us more like that and you know where the writer to the Hebrews is going he's going to the greatest example ever of suffering for the cause of his God the next time we come back we'll find ourselves in chapter 12 looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith who for the

joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame yes there is faith to enable our savior and everyone in him to be faithful even unto death let's pray father we thank you for revealing not only that in weakness faith can be made strong but showing us people who have gone through this same trial of suffering and found in their

God every resource they needed to be faithful unto death we can only sing those words Lord by faith in you that you will meet us in every point of suffering teach us even in the lesser battles when people would jeer at us for following your word to be ready to take mockery for the sake of Jesus help us to hide your word in our hearts that we would have the better resurrection ever before us and what you have prepared for us ready to steal us in the midst of trouble oh please watch over believers in places in the world where they are hunted down like animals where people want them dead protect them Lord and keep their faith strong don't let them deny you and help us to take up the good armor of faith and all the armor that you've given us so that in the evil day we may stand and having done all to stand to the praise of you our God we ask in Jesus name amen amen