

## “Trusting in Triumph and Tribulation” – Hebrews 11:32-40

Brandon Holiski  
Southern Oaks Baptist Church  
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*[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, [www.welovethegospel.com](http://www.welovethegospel.com)]*

Take your Bible and let's meet one more time in Hebrews 11...

That's correct. I said one more time. This will be our last week in this chapter (at least for this series). This sermon series—"The Cloud"—will still be going next week, but by then we will be in opening verses of chapter 12 to close it out. So we are almost through with this mini-series and then will resume our larger series through the book of Hebrews, which, as it turns out, we are also nearing the finish line for...

As we consider the remaining verses of Hebrews 11, we should remember that this great chapter on faith is situated in a larger context of exhortation (10:19-12:29), where the author has been urging his readers to persevere in faith and not fall away (10:19-39). In the flow of his argument, chapter 11 is meant to call the readers' attention to many from days gone by who did just that. They persevered in faith to the end. Despite their highs and lows, they did not fall away from the faith fully and finally. Their stories are put forth for our imitation that we too might go on believing.<sup>1</sup>

To that end, let's look at the text. The most important thing for you to understand today are the words I am about to read. Follow along with me as if that were true. Starting in verse 32. This is God's Word...

*“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—<sup>33</sup> who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. <sup>36</sup> Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> 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—<sup>38</sup> of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. <sup>39</sup> And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, <sup>40</sup> since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.” (Hebrews 11:32-40)*

I just love the way these verses begin...

### What More Shall I Say?

Many people believe that Hebrews was originally a sermon that was later converted into a letter. We can't know for sure, but that's as plausible an explanation as any and so it's not uncommon for people to refer to the author as the preacher. In verse 32 he certainly sounds like a preacher. It's as if he senses his "time constraints" and is beginning to question "his hearers' mental stamina," so he varies his approach. Instead of commenting on individual stories, he begins now to condense these "profiles of faith," and Israel's judges, kings, and prophets drew the short straw.<sup>2</sup> So he just throws out a half dozen names without comment and then offers some general descriptions that could fit the lives of several Old Testament saints. It's like he doesn't want to lose his audience, so he begins to wrap it up.

As a preacher myself, I know the feeling and have done the same thing many a time. “It is comforting to know that I am not the only preacher whose ambitions are curbed by time constraints, and perhaps by the attention span of the audience!”<sup>3</sup> As a member of this congregation, some of you are thinking, “You should learn from the author of Hebrews, pastor, and preach a shorter sermon!” To you I say, “Be careful what you ask for...” If we think of Hebrews as a sermon, then preaching the sermon as the author has written would take longer than most of the sermons you’ve heard from me.<sup>4</sup> So what were you saying?

A wise man once told me, “Sermonettes make Christianettes.” The writer of Hebrews understood that. Even still, at some point, a preacher has to land the plane. And you get the sense that is what this author is thinking about in verse 32 and following. These verses really break down into three sections that help us see the power of the faith possessed. In the first section we see...

### *Faith That Empowered Incredible Feats*

Think of these figures as those who through faith were given great success over impossible obstacles. Among those figures are the six names in verse 32, which come to us in three pairs, not in chronological order. The first four are from the book of Judges in the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup>

Gideon waged war with an army trimmed down to scraps—from thousands to a few hundred—all because God told him it was too big. Talk about some faith! God used Barak to deliver Israel from a mighty foe that had long been a thorn in their side. This too required faith in a time when faith was at a premium. Samson singlehandedly took on hundreds of Israel’s enemies and even with his dying breath delivered Israel from their oppressors. Jephthah, likewise, was one of Israel’s major judges.

And what of Israel’s kings? David is the only one mentioned. You probably know his story well. By faith, David courageously went against the giant Goliath. And among the prophets, Samuel lived as faithful a life as anyone in the Old Testament and was used by God in some of the most significant stories therein. “The point of all this is that by faith God’s people achieve what they never could have done otherwise.”<sup>6</sup> These six men are meant, among other things, to illustrate that principle. But after listing them, the author chooses to speak in more general terms. That’s what we find in verses 33 and following. We are left to speculate on who he may have had in mind.

Those “*who through faith conquered kingdoms*” (Heb. 11:33) could have included any number of people, but the victories of Barak over Sisera (Judges 4-5), Gideon over Midian (6-8), Jephthah over the Ammonites (11-12), Samson and Samuel over the Philistines (13-16; 1 Sam. 7), and David over lots of people were, no doubt, among them.

Similarly, all of these figures “*enforced justice*” in God’s hand (Heb. 11:33).<sup>7</sup> David is one of the clearest examples of one who “*obtained promises*” (11:33) when we remember the covenant that God established with him regarding an unending dynasty, which ultimately was fulfilled when Jesus Christ ascended the throne of heaven.

Men like Samson and David “*stopped the mouths of lions,*” the former with his bare hands (Judges 14:6-7; 1 Sam. 17:34-36), but the language used here is most reminiscent of the prophet Daniel, who was cast in a den of lions because of his faith (Dan. 6). You might recall that Daniel said to the king, “*My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me*” (6:22). And what was the reason given? The story tells us it was “*because he had trusted in his God*” (6:23). In other words, “*by faith...he stopped the mouths of lions.*”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego “*quenched the power of fire*” (Heb. 11:34), escaping the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar’s wrath for not bowing in false worship (Dan. 3). Their words of faith are seared into our memories:

*“O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”* (Daniel 3:16-18)

As for those who “*by faith...escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight,*” there are too many to count (11:34). But the climax of these incredible feats would have to be the first part of verse 35—“*Women received back their dead by resurrection.*” Two such resurrections come to mind. The first is the son of the widow of Zarephath and the second the son of the Shunammite, who were raised by the prayers of faith offered by the prophets Elijah and Elisha respectively (1 Kgs 17:17-23; 2 Kgs 4:18-36).

All of these stories indeed convey incredible feats accomplished and empowered by faith, but the writer of Hebrews knows that faith is as necessary in times of adversity as it is in times of victory. So in the middle of verse 35 he pivots abruptly so that we might consider how faith works in God’s people when their circumstances look more bleak than blessed. So he speaks of, second...

### *Faith That Encouraged Impressive Fortitude*

Think of these as figures who also conquered through faith (as in the previous examples), but did so not so much through victory over earthly threats, but through perseverance, even to the point of death. Look at the second half of verse 35. “*Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.*” Most scholars believe that the author has in mind certain Jewish figures who lived in the time between the Old and New Testament. 2 Maccabees, though not inspired Scripture, was accepted history for the Jews in the first century. In it we read of an aged scribe named Eleazar, who was tortured and eventually lost his life (2 Macc. 6:18-31). Perhaps he is on the author’s mind.

We also find the story a mother and seven brothers who were tortured “with scourges and whips” (2 Macc. 7:1). When one of them speaks up to say “we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our father,” his tongue was removed, he was maimed, and fried in a hot pan before his watching mother and siblings (2 Macc. 7:4-5). They too endured similar tortures and executions (2 Macc. 7:7-42). But they willingly went to the grave because of their faith in God. One of the brothers said to his executioner, “The King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws” (2 Macc. 7:9). A bit later the mother’s words are recorded and they capture her faith and hope for resurrection:

*“I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. Therefore the Creator of the world, 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, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.”* (2 Maccabees 7:22, 23; cf. 7:29)

Similarly, the last of the brothers to die, turns to the king and confidently tells him that his brothers, though dead, “after enduring their brief pain, now drink of ever-flowing life, by virtue of God’s covenant” (2 Macc. 7:36). These statements remind me of another passage from Jewish tradition, which reads:

*“The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seem to have died, and their departure was thought to be an affliction, and their going*

from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality” (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-4)

Those passages are not Scripture, but they were well known among the Jews of the first century. And stories such as these are celebrating the same idea that our author calls to mind when he says these sufferers were hopeful that “*they might rise again to a better life*” or, at the NIV translates it, “*a better resurrection*” (Heb. 11:35). Their torture and murder would not be the last word. They would rise again and that resurrection would be “*better*” than that of the boys raised by Elijah and Elisha (cf. 11:35). Why? Because those raised by the prophets would again die, but those who die in faith will one day be raised by God to enjoy life without end.

Moving forward in the text, countless other faithful men and women in history could have been among the “*Others*” mentioned in verse 36, who “*suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.*” Jeremiah, for example, was beaten and put in chains (Jer. 20:2; 37:15). The prophet Hanani was likewise imprisoned when he rebuked King Asa for his lack of faith (2 Chron. 16:7-10). King Ahab locked up the prophet Micaiah because he didn’t approve of his prophecy. The list goes on and on, but each and all endured in faith despite the adversity that their faith seemed to cause. They looked ahead, holding fast to the promises of God in faith.

The same could be said of those whose faith led them to be “*stoned*” or “*killed with the sword*” (Heb. 11:37). According to Jewish tradition, the prophet Isaiah was “*sawn in two,*” because of his faith, which is likely what the author has in mind when he mentions that act.<sup>8</sup> And among the faith there have been too many to count who have been sentenced to a life of poverty, going “*about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated...in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth*” (11:37-38). “If the [readers] expected to be accepted and praised, they needed to rethink matters in light of the OT”, for God’s people “have always been a minority people, a pilgrim people, and often despised and forsaken.”<sup>9</sup>

These are those “*of whom the world was not worthy,*” says the author of Hebrews in verses 38. “They were heirs destined for a far better homeland than this world has to offer: a heavenly country (v. 16).”<sup>10</sup> The world discarded them because they judged them unworthy because of their faith, but in truth their faith exposed that actually the world was unworthy of them. They were made for another world.

And now we come to the final verses of our text and see a...

### *Faith That Expected Future Fulfillment*

Look again at verses 39 and 40. “*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.*” These verses really get us to the heart of the book of Hebrews, which has been the superiority of Christ and the superiority of the New Covenant He established with the people of God.

The Old Testament saints were looking ahead to the New Testament realities. These new realities are “*better*” by far. Despite “the courageous achievements” of the heroes of faith we find in Hebrews 11, their stories, in the end, remind us of their “imperfect attainments.”<sup>11</sup> They did not receive the fullness of God’s promises in their lifetimes.

I really love what Raymond Brown writes on the matter:

“Rich as it was, all their faith [i.e., the faith of the OT saints] was confined to the limits of the old covenant. It strained forward to *something better*. They anticipated the fulfillment of God’s promise, the fuller revelation in Christ, but they did not witness its realization. They could be *made perfect* only as Christians are today, that is by Jesus himself and his sacrifice. Perfection or fulfillment would come

through a new covenant, by an eternal legacy, made possible because of a better sacrifice. The household of God (3:2, 6) consists of the faith participants in the old covenant and the members of the new. All alike are redeemed by Christ, the only perfecter of everyone's faith (12:2)."<sup>12</sup>

Amen!

With that in mind, let's begin connecting the dots between our text and our lives. First, let's consider...

### **Faith and Your Circumstances**

Let me make three brief points under this heading. First of all, these verses teach us that...

#### *Faith Doesn't Guarantee Comfort*

If our text had ended at the first half of verse 35, then we might have been left with the impression that those who walk by faith can count on a life free from suffering and characterized by the undeniable victories. We hear that a lot today. We sometimes refer to it as the prosperity Gospel. Its peddlers promise us health, wealth, success, and the fulfillment of all dreams, if we can muster enough faith (and maybe sow some financial seed in their coffers). Unfortunately, such false teachers rule the airwaves of Christian broadcasting and sell the most books in Christian shops, though there is nothing Christian about them. The writer of Hebrews would take them to task.

Verse 35b to 38 should be enough to put a nail in their theological coffins, but they are easy verses to neglect in the land of plenty. Nevertheless, we cannot read them, noting the kinds of things the people described did "by faith"—you know, things like get beat up, and imprisoned, and don cheap clothing, and wander around homeless, and lose their lives because of their faith—and walk away thinking that God is your genie who will grant your wishes in response to faith. This should be obvious. But clearly it's not to many. Not yet.

The point I'm making, however, is not that we will necessarily have it bad in this life. We may not. There is always a cost to following Christ as Lord, to be sure, but we don't get to set the cost. God is sovereign and He alone has set our days. We don't get to determine which side of the ledger our stories will be on—the stop the mouths of lions side or the sharp end of the sword side. That's not our choice. It's His. And it's His prerogative as Lord.

"Yes, God delivers some from trouble, but others he delivers in trouble. Faithful Elijah was spared Ahab's wrath, but numerous other faithful prophets died by his sword (1 Kings 19:10). Jeremiah escaped King Jehoiakim's hatred, but his fellow-prophet Uriah did not escape. If God sent an angel to break Peter's chains, he also allowed James, another of Christ's three closest disciples, to die at Herod's command. Understand, then, that God may place us on either of the two sides of this record: on the side of those who conquered in success or of those who conquered in defeat."<sup>13</sup>

The point is that God allows the sweet and bitter providences into our lives and as believers we ought to take Him at His Word, trusting in all things He is working for our good, accomplishing His purposes in our life (Rom. 8:28). We need to trust that God knows better than we do how best to accomplish His purposes in our lives and that our circumstances reflect that knowledge. We need to consider that, if we knew what God knew, we would, no doubt, have a different opinion about our lot in life and would more easily discern His love for us. And we must remember that "No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

But second, we must acknowledge that these verses teach us that...

### *Faith Is Required in All Contexts*

Whatever characterizes the circumstances of your life—whether triumphs or tragedies, good times or bad, mountains or valleys, prosperity or adversity—you are still called to trust the Lord. The same faith that spurred on the victories in the first half of our text, sustained the people in the second half. As one author remarks, “What matters is not the circumstances—neither the blessing in this life, nor the trials. What matters is the faith by which we may conquer in all circumstances through the blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>14</sup>

But that faith is proved—evidenced—in our lives through how we engage with our circumstances. And that leads us to the next point...

### *Faith in the Unseen Is Still Seen*

We can't control the sweet or bitter providences of our life. But by God's grace, we ought to consider those sweet providences as “partial and provisional fulfillments of God's promise,”<sup>15</sup> to whet our appetite for glory. They make us pause and worship. They make us say, “Wow, what a blessing, Lord. This is such a gift. And, as great as this is, I can only imagine what you have you have in store for us in glory!” People take notice of that kind of faith.

And if we are met with bitter providences, with God's help, we might persevere in faith, “knowing that a ‘better resurrection’ is coming and that the pain and torment of the present world will not last.”<sup>16</sup> There was an early church father, known as Justin Martyr, who displayed such faith. One day, when he was overlooking the place that he and his congregation would be killed, he said, “Remember brothers and sisters, they can kill us, but they can't hurt us.”<sup>17</sup> That's the kind of faith that characterized the Old Testament saints mentioned in the second half of verse 35 and following. And that's the kind of faith that many Christians around the world evidence when called upon to suffer for Christ's sake. We may never bear the same cost for following Jesus in our setting, but the world should still see evidence of such devotion in our lives.

Of course, none us possess a faith that doesn't waver. So let me add a couple thoughts related to...

### **Faith and Your Failures**

The first point is one I stress to you often, namely...

#### *Faith's Object, Not Strength, Is Decisive*

Think about it. If the author had been trying to draw attention to the strength of faith exhibited by the individuals he lists, surely he could have selected a less tarnished lot. There were other judges—men like Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar (Judges 3)—whose flaws go unmentioned in the text, even if only because their lives are so briefly summarized. David was awesome, but his sin and its aftermath is as memorable to us as his successes. Maybe Josiah—a king known for godliness and ushering spiritual revival—would have been a better choice (2 Kings 22-23; cf. 2 Chron. 35:20-22).<sup>18</sup> But the author goes a different route. He fashions a different list. And, as Tom Schreiner notes (echoing the sentiments of most):

“One of the striking features of the list is the weakness and sins of those identified as people of faith. Barak wasn't courageous enough to go to battle without Deborah (Judg 4:8). Asking for signs

demonstrated Gideon's lack of faith (Judg 6:36-40), and he also made an ephod that catapulted Israel into sin (Judg 8:24-27). Samson's sexual infidelities and impulsive acts are infamous (Judges 13-16). Jephthah foolishly vowed to sacrifice his own daughter (11:30-31, 34-40). It is harder to find blemishes in Samuel, but his sons didn't turn out well, and he appointed them as judges anyway (1 Sam 8:1-3). David committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered Uriah (2 Samuel 11)."<sup>19</sup>

These seem like counterintuitive examples, if your goal is to highlight the strength of people's faith. But what if that's not the author's goal? Then maybe we are missing the point. What if he's calling us to "listen to God as he testified on behalf of patriarchs, politicians, prophets, and prostitutes who had fluctuating faith and questionable morality but who continued to trust God to be faithful to his promises."<sup>20</sup> What if we are meant to see, not the strength of their faith, but its object and presence at the end, even amid ghastly afflictions. "If they could act in faith and see God work, so could the sermon-letter's first hearers, some of whom had 'drooping hands' and 'weak knees' (Heb. 12:12-13)—and so can we in our trials and frailty."<sup>21</sup> Maybe that's the intended effect.

Do you remember how the chapter began?<sup>22</sup>

*"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup> For by it the people of old received their commendation."* (Hebrews 11:1-2)

What commendation did they receive by faith? Well, based on verse 4, it seems the answer must, at the very least, include righteousness. We believe God and God credits that faith as righteousness. We trust in Christ alone to save us from our sin—because He lived perfectly, died vicariously, and rose victoriously—and we are counted righteous in God's sight. Not because, in ourselves, we are. But because God, in His mercy, clothes us in the righteousness of Christ. This is the Gospel. And we should remember it when we read, in verse 39, that *"all these [were] commended through their faith"*. Yes, even men like Samson!

I love what Calvin says about this...

*"There was none of them whose faith did not falter... In [e]very saint there is always to be found something reprehensible. Nevertheless although faith may be imperfect and incomplete it does not cease to be approved by God. There is no reason therefore why the fault from which we labour should break us or discourage us provided we go on by faith in the race of our calling."<sup>23</sup>*

Let the point comfort you, because it's meant to. It's not the sins of these men and women in Hebrews 11 that are remembered. He doesn't even mention any of their faults, though they were many! The only thing remembered is their faith—their trust—in God. Does it not comfort you that even if our lives have not been marked, by and large, by unwavering faith, that even a mustard seed of faith will prove more decisive than our multitude of failures? Believers will not be condemned by their failures (though they be many), but they will be commended "by faith." Our failures will not be remembered, any more than the men and women of this chapter. Our faith will be.<sup>24</sup> Faith is decisive. Not our failures. Faith. Not our faults and flaws. God will prove that to us on the day of judgment. It is God's great pleasure to commend faith.<sup>25</sup>

This is amazing. And it's this point that has stirred in me the most worship this past week. I hope you too will linger on this point in the week ahead.

I wish we could end there, but there is still one last point to be made. This text reminds us, finally, that...

## *We Have No Excuse*

The author has made it clear that we, this side of the cross, have received greater privileges than the people described in Hebrews 11, who walked by faith before the appearing of Christ. Our greater privilege comes with greater responsibility. Raymond Brown makes this point better than I can, so let me close with his remarks:

“They were enabled to do so much, but it was limited and partial. They inherited, received, obtained, and proved the promises. But in some cases it was mainly a sense of expectancy and lifelong anticipation which characterized their faith. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not receive all that was promised (11:13); the fulfillment was not theirs to see, but they endured. Similarly, Christians receive some promises and experience their blessings, whilst at the same time they trust other promises and await their fulfillment. But we have received far more than any believer could have hoped to experience under the old covenant. They could not hope to experience personally the inward purification, freedom from fear, immediate help, timely grace, present and eternal salvation, certain hope, clear conscience, assured pardon and constant access which we have in Christ. The richer provision ought surely to inspire us to better faith and more costly sacrifice. If these courageous and devout sufferers achieved so much when, comparatively speaking, they had so little, then there must be no limit to our service. The opportunities are innumerable and the resources are limitless.”<sup>26</sup>

But, brothers and sisters, if we are going to walk in these opportunities the way that God intends, then we will need to keep our eye on Christ. And that is precisely where our author goes next. To be continued...

Let's pray...

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews* (BTC; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 368.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis E. Johnson, "Hebrews," in *Hebrews-Revelation* (ESVEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 178.

<sup>3</sup> Richard D. Phillips, *Hebrews* (REC; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 519.

<sup>4</sup> My sermons are shorter these days than they have been the previous 17 years or so. There are several reasons for that. This may surprise you, but people in the pews have very different opinions about such things. You can't be a pastor for too long before you realize that you're not going to satisfy everyone. What some like, other hate. The reason one person joins a church is the same reason another leaves. You try not to take it personally, but you're human. And you try to remember that it could always be worse. I mean, I could be a song leader... But anyway, I remember back at my last church really trying to find the "sweet spot" in sermon length and depth for that audience and confiding in one of the deacons about the struggle. He looked at me and said something that I'll never forget—"Sermonettes make Christianettes." He wasn't wrong. I didn't take it as a license to preach for an hour and a half, but I have seen that truth borne out in life and ministry since then.

<sup>5</sup> The days of the judges were dark days. We are repeatedly told "*everyone did what was right in his own eyes*" (e.g. Judges 17:6; 21:25). It was an age characterized by backsliding and apostasy, even among the judges themselves. But nevertheless they were figures that God moved powerfully in and through and their mighty acts of deliverance are here credited to their faith.

<sup>6</sup> Phillips, 522.

<sup>7</sup> "It is quite possible, however, to succeed in battle without faith in the Lord. Therefore, we read that these heroes 'enforced justice' as well. The Greek literally says that they 'established righteousness.' This was certainly a hallmark of Israel's faithful judges and kings. They did not merely win battles, but they also served God by establishing his righteousness within their domains. This is always a mark of godly leadership, as was said of David: 'David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people' (2 Sam. 8:15)." *Ibid.*, 520.

<sup>8</sup> *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 5:1, 2, 11-14.

<sup>9</sup> Schreiner, 373.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, 181.

<sup>11</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews* (BST; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 224.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 224. Kent Hughes writes, "No one was "made perfect" under the Old Covenant, because Christ had not yet died. They were saved, but not until Jesus' work on the cross was complete could salvation be perfect. Their salvation looked ahead to what Christ would do. Ours looks back to what he has done—and ours is perfect." R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (PW; Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993), 153–154. Leon Morris also makes a wonderful point: "Salvation is social. It concerns the whole people of God. We can experience it only as part of the whole people of God. As long as the believers in Old Testament times were without those who are in Christ, it was impossible for them to experience the fullness of salvation. Furthermore, it is what Christ has done that opens the way into the very presence of God for them as for us. Only the work of Christ brings those of Old Testament times and those of the new and living way alike into the presence of God." Leon Morris, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 132, 133.

<sup>13</sup> Phillips, 524.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* "How are we to overcome great obstacles? How do we who are so weak find the strength our circumstances require? What are we to do to overcome tragedies? The answer to all of these is the same. God's people are to have faith in him, finding deliverance and power and resurrection in the God we believe and trust." *Ibid.*, 522.

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, 182.

<sup>16</sup> Schreiner, 374.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in R. Albert Mohler, *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews* (CCE; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 192.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, 179.

<sup>19</sup> Schreiner, 369. Cf. Mohler, 191; Johnson, 179; Brown, 221.

<sup>20</sup> Johnson, 179.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> "There is a framing device in that the author returns to the introduction in 11:2, which affirms that the ancestors were approved because of their faith (11:39)." Schreiner, 369.

<sup>23</sup> William B. Johnston, trans., *Calvin's Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 182.

<sup>24</sup> "Still it is not the sins and faults of these men that are remembered (he doesn't mention the faults of any of them!) but their faith and trust in God, showing that perseverance in faith for the author is not the same thing as perfection. Indeed one may sin dramatically and still persevere in faith. We think of Samson as an example here. The narrator in Judges suggests that the Lord had not abandoned him, despite his dalliance with Delilah, for we are told 'his hair began to grow back after it had been shaved' (Judg 16:22). And when Samson put his hands on the pillars, he could do nothing if the Lord were not with him (Judg 16:25-30). The story of Delilah illustrates that when the Lord wasn't with him he was useless. Samson died trusting in the Lord, despite his foibles." Schreiner, 369-370.

<sup>25</sup> Hughes, 153.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, 224-225.