



+ **YOU**

Summer 2023
Mentoring: Investing in Others

Sermon Title: Living And Dying For Christ
To be used with Session 6: Paul and Timothy
Scripture: Hebrews 11:1–12:2

Connection With The Study: To complement the Bible study, “Paul and Timothy,” this sermon uses the “roll call of faith” in Hebrews 11 as an example of many people of faith over the years who taught us by their lives to be people of faith ourselves. Though these mentors didn’t invest in our lives personally, they invested in our lives as examples of faith and courage.

Introduction: Hebrews is one of the general epistles which means we’re unsure of the recipients or their exact life situations. The writer is unknown to us as well. Luther famously said “only God knows” who wrote the letter. Some scholars suggest the letter was originally a sermon the writer delivered to his congregation. The oft-repeated refrain is “let us.” We can visualize a preacher urging his congregation to bond together in dedicated service: “Let us serve and obey the Lord.” It’s also apparent that he wrote in a time of hardship since another theme is God’s judgment for those who fall away.

1. Faith Heroes Lived for God (Hebrews 11:4-35a)

The writer explained that faith is validation of things we cannot see. God fulfills His promises as we trust him, and our faith grows. Old Testament examples abound in this retelling of spiritual history. All these heroes are dead, but the testimony of their lives continues. Abel, Enoch and Noah are in the lineage of faith in unique ways. Abraham was singled out for three acts of faith. He was faithful to leave the familiar and move to a land chosen by God. He and Sarah believed the promise of God about an heir, though they waited 25 years for Isaac. Certainly, Abraham and Sarah weren’t always faithful; they stumbled along the way as we all do. But God used them to produce a chosen nation. Abraham was highlighted again as exemplary when he took Isaac, the child of promise, to Mt. Moriah and was willing to give him back to God. This seemed to be contrary to God’s long-standing promise to bless the world through Isaac, but Abraham showed his devotion in this hard test of faith. After listing Isaac and Joseph and Moses, the writer cited Rahab, the harlot of Jericho as a person of faith. Once again we see how God works through fallible humans. This is a word of hope for all of us.

2. Faith Heroes Died for God (Hebrews 11:35b-40)

The stories of these men and women continue to inspire followers of Christ. They believed the promises of God, lived for him, and testified to his faithfulness. But the writer took an abrupt and noticeable turn in v. 35. After recounting exploits of victory, he shared exploits of suffering and death. These godly people didn’t experience the thrill of accomplishment so much as the agony

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of suffering and death. The list includes mocking, imprisonment, torture, scourging, and stoning. A unique word is being “sawed in two.” No one is specifically named in this horrific descriptor, but a long-standing Jewish tradition is that Isaiah died in this manner. Truly, “the world was not worthy of them” (v. 38).

Some spiritual heroes are heroes because of their lives, and some are heroes because of their lives and their deaths. One thinks in Christian history of Polycarp, Ann Judson, Lottie Moon, Bill Wallace, and others who were faithful unto death.

Hymn writer Fanny Crosby wrote:

Living or dying, I still would be Thine;
Yes I am mortal while Thou art divine.
Master, Thou callest, and this I reply,
“Ready and willing, Lord here am I.”ⁱ

3. Faith Heroes Show Us the Way Forward (Heb. 12:1-2)

The writer called the faith heroes of chapter 11 “a large cloud of witnesses.” They were faithful to the Lord despite opposition and hardships. Their examples should inspire us in commitment. Though it was said of Abel specifically, it’s true that all of these, though dead, yet speak to us (Heb. 11: 4). The writer used another “let us” when he envisioned a race. In this race of faith, we must lay aside hindrances and run with endurance. Some of his audience had been weighted down with discouragement and did not run with endurance. And certainly in this post-pandemic American society we’ve seen a number of believers who’ve fallen out of the ranks of the faithful. Whereas these faith heroes served to inspire his congregation and future generations, the writer pointed to our finest example, Jesus. He endured the agony of the cross for the joy of providing salvation for many. We not only look to numerous faith heroes for encouragement, but primarily we “[keep] our eyes on Jesus” as we seek to live obedient and fruitful lives.

Conclusion: In the same way Paul mentored his son-in-faith Timothy, the Bible records the exploits of God’s faithful through the ages who mentor us by their examples. Whereas this is true, our faith is “Christo-centric.” God provided something even better for us (Heb. 11:39). Our faith begins and ends with God’s ultimate revelation of Himself, His son. We trust Christ for salvation, and we keep our focus on Him as we grow and face the challenges of living in commitment to God in an ungodly world.

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ⁱ “Lord, Here Am I,” *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: LifeWay Worship, 2008), Hymn 537.