



Living a Life of Faith

An ABF Series on Hebrews 11

The Losers: A Life God Blesses Despite

A Little Disappointed?

How do we respond when people who have shown a love for God fall hard? What does God think? The Puritans are often held up as the gold standard for personal holiness, yet executed nineteen “witches” in one of the darkest chapters in American history. Charles Spurgeon was one of the greatest preachers ever, but used to spend weeks away from his church battling severe depression. All of the names left in Hebrews 11 were very broken people that most of us would not have commended. But God did; and that should teach us a few important lessons.

The Judges

_____ (Judges 6-9)

The story begins with him hiding from the Midianites (6:11-12), continues with him secretly taking a stand for God (6:22-25), and ends with him testing God after God had already proved Himself (6:36-40).

After the battle that freed God's people, he created a priestly garment that became the object of worship for the people (8:24-27). Then, after turning down being king and assuring his son wouldn't rule (8:23), he named his son Abimelech which means "my father is king." After Gideon died, Abimelech executed his brothers and became a tyrant with a short lived reign (9:1-57).

Despite all of his failures, God looks at Gideon for His faith. He did show tremendous trust to go up against the invaders with an army of 300 men carrying trumpets and water pitchers. The author of Hebrews looks back and sees, not a coward, but a man of faith despite major flaws.

_____ **(Judges 4)**

Even here, when the prophetess Deborah relays God's command, he refuses to go unless she goes with him (4:8). Although not as bad as Gideon, this is another example of weak faith that might perhaps surprise us.

_____ **(Judges 13-16)**

Samson is one of the most surprising people on this list. I have heard several sermons on Samson. None of them have ended with "be like Samson." Samson was appointed by God as a Nazarite, a "separate one." Nazarites had three rules (Judges 13:2-5, cf. Numbers 6:1-8): don't touch dead things, don't drink, and don't cut your hair. Samson ate honey from the carcass of a dead lion (Judges 14:8-9); he probably drank at his wedding (Judges 14:10); and told his Philistine lover that cutting his hair would deprive him of his strength (Judges 16:14-17).

Samson was tasked with defeating the Philistines, yet he slept with three separate Philistine women (14:1-2; 16:1-3; 4-6). The

occasions in which he carries out God's judgment are all based on a personal grudge against the Philistines, in fact God must use Samson's sin to get him started on God's mission for his life (Judges 14:1-4)! This is a man who lived for self, chased after women, broke the rules, and in the end didn't even recognize it when God's Spirit had left him (Judges 16:20). Yet once again, despite all the selfishness and sinfulness, God saw through that to see a man of faith.

_____ (Judges 11)

Jephthah made a promise to God that if God would give him victory over his enemies, then whoever or whatever came from his house to greet him first he would sacrifice to God as a burnt offering (11:30-31). He was heartbroken when the first thing to meet him when he got home was his own daughter (11:34).

Jephthah had begun thinking like the pagans around him, believing it would have been worse to go back on his word than to sacrifice his own daughter. This story, like the rest of the book of Judges, is meant to show that God's people needed a king that would lead them in the ways of God (Judges 17:6; 21:25). This story shows the danger of thinking like the world around us.

David and Samuel

_____, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, the man after God's own heart, is not surprising. But what is surprising was David's adultery, murder, poor parenting, and counting the army of Israel, all of which cost him and those around him a great price.

_____ began his ministry by warning Eli that God would judge him for poor parenting (1 Samuel 3:10-14). He ended up making the very same mistakes (1 Samuel 8:1-3).

The Rest of the List

A lot of the characters we have studied so far are deeply flawed people.

- Noah – _____
- Abraham – _____
- Isaac – _____
- Jacob – _____
- Moses – _____
- Israel – _____

Application

1. Be encouraged in your faith but not emboldened in your sin.
2. Beware of blending with the ungodly culture like Abraham, Jephthah, or the Puritans.
3. Judge those who have gone before you and those around you with the same grace God does.
4. Make sure Jesus Christ is your hero, because He is the only One Who will never let you down (cf. Hebrews 12:1-2).