

# The Book of Hebrews

מְאֹנְשׁ מִנְמָה דָא מִנְהָת אַקְלָא  
צְמַאַלְלָא נְתַחְצְרָה דְרַחְסָנָה סָקָה  
אַחֲרַ פְּקָלָא תְּסִנְ סְרְבָּאַלְלָה  
רַרְתָּא סָקָה תְּאַקְסָנָה דְמַמְצָה  
תְּאַתְּפָלָשָׁה נְתַרְדְּנָה הַרְפָּרָה נְרַלְדָה  
תְּאַגְּשָׁה רַלְדָה מְלַלְצָה סָסָה תְּלָשָׁה



To Download this lesson go to:

<http://www.purifiedbyfaith.com/Hebrews/Hebrews.htm>

# Outline of Hebrews

## “Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus’ Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)
- V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)
- VI. Epilogue: Final Exhortations (13:1-25)

# Outline of Hebrews

## V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)

- A. Exhortation to Draw Near, Hold Fast, and Encourage One Another (10:19-25)
- B. Warning: No Hope of Forgiveness for Those Who Turn from Christ (10:26-31)
- C. Call to Persevere in Faith (10:32-12:3)
  - 1. Don't Abandon Confidence but Persevere in Faith (10:32–39)
  - 2. The “Hall of Faith” – Description and Examples of Persevering Faith (11:1-12:3)
- D. Exhortations to Readers to Endure (12:4-29)

# Outline of Hebrews

2. The “Hall of Faith” – Description and Examples of Persevering Faith (11:1-12:3)
  - a. Prologue: The Nature of Faith (11:1-3)
  - b. The Faith of Those Prior to the Flood (11:4-7)
  - c. The Faith of Abraham and His Heirs (11:8-22)
  - d. The Faith of Moses and Those Entering the Land (11:23-31)
  - e. A Closing Catalog of Faith (11:32-40)
  - f. Run the Race Looking to Jesus as the Supreme Example of Faith (12:1-3)

# A Closing Catalog of Faith (11:32-40)

<sup>32</sup> *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.*

<sup>32</sup> ***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--***

- Once again, we see that the author is mindful of the length of time that would be involved in listening to his sermon-letter being read aloud.
- He has already abbreviated what could have been a longer discussion of the tabernacle's furniture (Heb 9:5).
- He now **condenses** the remainder of the list of OT heroes of faith, since, he says, "***time would fail me***" to discuss ***in detail*** the stories of Israel's judges, kings, and prophets.
- In his final greetings the author will draw attention to the ***restraint*** he shows here as a ***reason*** for his hearers to "***bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly***" (13:22).

<sup>32</sup> *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--*

- The mere **mention** of the names of four judges (“*Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah*”), a king (“*David*”), and a prophet (“*Samuel*”) would, no doubt, bring their stories to the minds of his Jewish readers.
- The names are **not** in strict chronological order. In the Bible:
  - Barak (Judges 4-5) appears before Gideon (Judges 6-8),
  - Jephthah (Judges 11-12) appears before Samson (Judges 13-16).
  - Samuel, Israel’s last judge as well as a prophet (1 Samuel 1-25), appears before David (1 Samuel 16 – 2 Samuel 24).
- Perhaps in each pair the more prominent individual is mentioned first.

<sup>32</sup> *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--*

- It is also fitting to list “*Samuel and the prophets*” last, since Samuel is viewed as the head of those prophets following Moses, who confronted Israel for their breach of covenant while promising God’s continuing faithfulness to his unfaithful people (Acts 3:24).
- As we will see in the next few verses (Heb 11:33-34), each of the six men mentioned here “*through faith conquered kingdoms*,” “*enforced justice*” (in varying degrees), “*became mighty in war*,” and “*put foreign armies to flight*”.
- Nevertheless, although our author highlights the “*faith*” of these men, the OT accounts present blemished portraits of the judges and of King David.

<sup>32</sup> *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--*

- Like Moses, “*Gideon*” tried to evade God’s call to courageous leadership (Judg 6:11-40; cf. Exodus 3-4).
- “*Barak*” timidly refused to take up arms without the support of the judge-prophetess Deborah (Judg 4:6-8).
- “*Samson*” scorned his holy status as a Nazirite, wielding his extraordinary strength more often in service to his own sensual lust and rage than in submission to his God (Judg. 14:1-4, 8-9, 19-20; 15:1-8; 16:1-17).
- “*Jephthah*” rashly vowed away his daughter’s life in exchange for victory in battle, and then even more wickedly kept his vow, contrary to God’s law (Judg. 11:29-40; cf. Exodus 13:15; Deut 12:29-31; 18:10).

<sup>32</sup> *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--*

- “*David*” waged war in the name of the Lord (1 Sam 17: 45) but later shamed the Lord’s name through adultery and murder, bringing rape and bloodshed into his own family and civil war to Israel (2 Sam 11-18).
- Even “*Samuel*” apparently replicated the parental negligence of the priest who had raised him, so that his sons turned out as badly as Eli’s (1 Sam 2:12-17, 22-36; 8:1-4).
- If the author had intended to convey the impression that God commended OT figures who were stalwart in trust and spotless in character, he might have selected judges described so briefly that their flaws remained unmentioned (such as Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar – Judges 3) or a king such as Josiah, distinguished for his righteous reforms (2 Kings 22-23; but see 2 Chron 35:20-22).

<sup>32</sup> *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--*

- ***Instead***, the author calls us to listen to God as he testifies 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.
- If these flawed OT heros 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 12:12-3) – and so can we in our trials and frailty.

<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.**

- Here the author tells us that these heroes “*conquered kingdoms, . . . were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.*”
- In addition to the men listed in verse 32, God granted triumph in battle to **other** judges, to Jonathan son of Saul, and to Judah’s later kings.
- “*Justice*” was “*enforced*” by judges such as Deborah and Samuel (Judg 4:4-5; 1 Sam 8:1-7; 12:1-5) and by kings such as David and Solomon (2 Sam 8:15; 1 Kings 3).

<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.

- Although we cannot overlook the **defects** of those named in verse 32, we must not **underestimate** the “*faith*” involved in:
  - Gideon’s waging war against Midian with a brigade reduced from thousands to three hundred
  - Samson’s single-handed slaughter of Philistines
  - Young David’s confrontation with the well-armed Philistine champion Goliath.

<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.

- These men acted “*through faith*” and “*obtained promises*” from God:
  - Barak was promised victory over Sisera’s forces (Judg 4:6-7).
  - The Angel of the Lord promised Gideon that he would triumph over Midian (Judg 6:12-13).
  - Promises were made that Samson would begin to save Israel from the Philistines (Judg 13:5).
  - David received **many** promises, including being anointed as king (1 Sam 16:13) and receiving the promise of a dynasty (2 Sam 7).

<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.

- We see here that various OT believers were **delivered** from **violent death**:
- Samson and David “*stopped the mouths of lions*” by killing them (cf. Judg 14:5-6; 1 Sam 17:34-37).
- But the wording here echoes Daniel when he says: “*My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths*.”
- As you may recall, Daniel emerged unharmed “*because he had trusted* [i.e. had faith] *in his God*” (Dan 6:22-23).

<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.

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego “*quenched the power of fire*” (see Daniel 3).
- David “*escaped the edge of the sword*” (cf. 1 Sam 17:45-51), as did prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, and Jeremiah, who had no weapons in hand to defend themselves but relied on their “*faith*” in God (1 Kings 19:1-3; 2 Kings 6:30-7: 20; Jer 26:7-24).

<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.**

- There were many others who “*through faith... were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.*”
- One thinks, for example, of David as a young boy facing Goliath, or of Gideon, a most unimpressive figure of his day; nevertheless, God used **both** as instruments of power and victory.
- The author may also have in mind the Maccabees, who, during our author’s time, were considered among the greatest of military heroes of history.

<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.**

- Here we see that even **death** could not stop the work of God on behalf of his people.
- Women such as the poor widow of Zarephath and the woman of Shunem received their sons back from the dead by the hands of Elijah and Elisha respectively (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:17-37).
- Notice that in the middle of this verse, the writer to the Hebrews **shifts gears** from more **positive** outcomes encountered by faith to faith that was expressed in the face of **great hardship**.

<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.*

- Although some experienced resurrection, others expressed faith by embracing torture and death, refusing deliverance in light of a greater reward beyond the grave.
- F. F. Bruce, for example, points to the account of Eleazar of the Maccabean period, who chose death over disloyalty to God (2 Macc 6: 19, 28).
- He also refers to the story of a mother and her seven sons who spoke eloquently of the afterlife even while being tortured to death (2 Macc 7:1-41; 4 Macc 8:1-17:24).

<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.*

- It is of great importance for the readers, and for all Christians, to understand that the life of faith does not *always* involve *success* by the world's standards.
- The faithful person does not *always* experience *deliverance*; faith and suffering are *not* incompatible.
- Faith, however, *sanctifies* suffering.
- If we suffer apparent defeat while standing for what is right, we need to keep in view (through the eyes of faith) that God promises *future blessings* to those who *faithfully* follow him.

<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.*

- The author offers his readers ***no guarantee*** of an easy Christianity.
- If in their “*struggle against sin*” they have “*not yet resisted to the point of shedding ... blood*” (i.e., been killed), as the author will say in Heb 12:4, there can be no assurance that they may not have to do so in the future.
- The ***immediate, temporal*** outcome is not the important thing.
- ***Faith*** is what ***finally*** matters.

<sup>36</sup> *Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.*

- When the recipients of the letter heard the author speak of those who experienced “*mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment*,” it might have reminded them of members of their ***own community*** who had suffered some of these things in earlier days, as our author had already reminded them (Heb 10:33).
- Should they have a similar experience in the future, it might help them to realize that they were not the first to tread this path.

<sup>36</sup> *Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.*

- One Old Testament figure that the author may have had in mind here was the prophet Jeremiah.
- On one occasion Jeremiah was beaten and put in the stocks (Jer 20:2), and complained that he had been made a laughingstock and an object of mockery not only by the public at large but by members of his own family (Jer 20:7-10).
- At a later date he was beaten again and put in prison (Jer 37:15), from which he was taken out and thrown into the muddy cistern from which he was rescued by Ebed-melech the Ethiopian. (Jer 38:6-13)

<sup>37a</sup> *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword...*

- The list of sufferings continues.
- Some were “*stoned*” to death because of their devotion to the Lord.
- **Zechariah** was put to death by stoning for rebuking the people (2 Chron 24:20-21; cf. 1 Kgs 21:13; Mat 23:37; Luke 13:34).
- According to tradition, **Jeremiah** was stoned to death in Egypt.
- Others were “*sawn in two*”, and according to Jewish tradition this was the fate of **Isaiah**.
- Others were “*killed with the sword*” (cf. 1 Kgs 19:10; Jer 26:23).

<sup>37b</sup> *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.*

- Even those not called to pay the ***ultimate*** price of martyrdom, endured a lifestyle of deprivation and marginalization, alienation and exclusion befitting their identity as “*strangers and exiles on the earth*” (Heb 11:13).
- Their destitution, clothing (“*skins of sheep and goats*”), and homelessness (“*wandering about in deserts*”) showed they had no status or security in society (cf. 1 Kings 17:3-7; 2 Kings 1:8; Matt 3:1-4).
- Their shelter, such as it was, in “*dens and caves*” (cf. Judg 6:2; 1 Sam 13:6; 1 Kings 18:4), foreshadowed the plight of the original readers of this letter, whose property had been seized (Heb 10:34).

<sup>37b</sup> *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.*

- Our author would concur with the apostle Paul's assessment that Christ's apostles— and, in fact, all of Jesus' followers— are regarded by those outside the church as "*scum of the world, the refuse of all things*" (1 Cor 4:13).
- The faith that pleases **God**, however, since it is the demonstrable evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1), provides a ***radically different*** perspective.
- It enabled Moses to assess the reproach of Christ, as he endured solidarity with God's mistreated people, as ***greater wealth*** than Egypt's treasures (Heb 11:25-26).
- Such faith reveals that these outcasts, whom the world despised, were actually the people "*of whom the world was not worthy*".
- They were heirs destined for a far better homeland than ***this*** world has to offer: a ***heavenly*** country (Heb 11:16).

<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.*

- In these last two verses, the author concludes his example list with a fitting epilogue.
- When the author says that the great heroes of faith were “**commended**” by God, he means that God himself had born witness to their faithfulness.
- By living out faith in the unseen God these men and women of history had established themselves as appropriate examples for the readers of this letter, who were now being faced with choosing between the path of **faith** or the path of **faithlessness**.
- The author’s main point through his example list is that “**faith**” is the **only** right path for God’s people.

<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.

- There is an echo here of what the author had said earlier concerning Abraham and his heirs: “*These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.*”
- I had **great difficulty** understanding verse 40.
- Almost all of my commentaries say that “*the ‘something better’ that God provided for us is the new and better covenant, inaugurated on better promises by the blood of Jesus*” – or something like that.
- While that idea is presented in **other** places in the book of Hebrews (8:6–12; 9:13–15), I have a hard time making that idea fit with the rest of what the author says in **this** verse.

<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.

- But, because “*time would fail me*” to try to explain the ins and outs of verse 40, and because I am still sorting out what this text is actually telling us, I’m going to wait and cover this text at the beginning of ***next*** week’s lesson.
- So stay tuned!

# Class Discussion Time



## \*Class Discussion Time

- We saw in today's lesson that many of the men held up by the author as heroes of the faith were, in many ways, flawed and sinful men.
- Furthermore, I pointed out that although we cannot overlook the **defects** of these heroes, we must not **underestimate** the "*faith*" involved in what they did.
- Because, after all, the author, no doubt fully aware of the flawed nature of these men, chooses to **characterize** them primarily as men who were commended by God for their faith.
- Is there a lesson for us in what the author does here, as we contemplate our own flaws and occasional sinful behavior, all the while seeking to faithfully serve the Lord?

## \*Class Discussion Time

- We also saw in today's lesson that it is of great importance for all Christians to understand that the life of faith does not ***always*** involve ***success*** by the world's standards.
- God does indeed often deliver his people from trouble in this life. But at the same time, a faithful Christian does not ***always*** experience ***deliverance***; faith and suffering are ***not*** incompatible.
- Do you think it's important for us Christians to have this perspective? Why or why not?