

Observations From Hebrews 11

This is our third Sunday morning studying from Hebrews 11. This great chapter of faith was written specifically to first century Christians. They were going through trials and perhaps discouraged. If written before 70 AD they and the temple with its priesthood would still be offering sacrifices on a daily basis. Alienated from their Jewish families, persecuted from Roman authorities, the Christians needed encouragement.

The Hebrew writer gave them, and us a history lesson on some of the greatest men in the Bible. Here is what I noticed about these people.

They crossed generational lines as Abel lived many years before Abraham or King David. Some lived before the flood, some before the giving of the Law of Moses, still others during Israel being united, and some after its division. They all faced challenges such as patience in waiting, they were considered strangers, and going against the crowd. We today face those same challenges as the world mocks God's word and consider us strange. "In these things they are surprised, that you are not running with them into the same excess of riot, blaspheming." (1 Peter 4:4). The people in Hebrews 11 were different from the world and they knew it.

They often paid a price for being faithful. Moses left Pharaoh's household and all of its comforts. He had to endure the complaining and second guessing of his own brethren. As mentioned in this chapter some hid in caves, others killed by the sword, and yet they obeyed God. Have you ever wondered how much you would be willing to endure in your service to God?

These people endured to the end; they did not give up. Noah did not quit building on the ark, Abraham did not return back to his home country. Moses did not seek to return to Pharaoh's household, etc. Faith does not quit but perseveres.

They were not perfect either. Every person mentioned in Hebrews 11 did something wrong. Abraham lied twice about his relationship with Sarah. Moses disobeyed God by striking the rock in Numbers 20 and was not allowed into the promise land. David has a whole laundry list of sins attached

to his name. None of these people were perfect but they believed God and acted in faith. The next time you get discouraged by your shortcomings think of these people.

They all looked to the future and not the immediate. We are told to do the same, for we walk by faith, not by sight; (2 Corinthians 5:7) Walking by faith means you build a boat when you have never seen it rain, it means taking your only son and offering him on an altar because God said so, it means killing a lamb and putting its blood on a doorpost so God would Passover your household before killing the firstborn in Egypt. Today walking by faith means obeying the word of God, believing in Jesus as the Son of God, believing in His resurrection, being willing to confess Him as the Son of God, dying with Him in baptism and arising to walk in newness of life. It means being different from the world.

God was not and is not ashamed of those who live by faith. -- Dennis Tucker