

**Hebrews 11 – No 3 Verses 20 to 31 Families of Faith**

This section of Hebrews 11 covers a huge swathe of Israelite history. Following on from Abraham last week we start with his son Isaac (the one who was nearly offered as a sacrifice) and we end with a prostitute from Jericho called Rahab. None of these people are perfect – they all have some negative things recorded about them and yet they are recorded in this ‘Hall of Faith’.

1. This section is full of dysfunctional families, a murderer and a prostitute yet they are recorded here.

Have we become too stereotyped about the people we think God should choose to serve his purposes?

We don’t delve too much into history of the early patriarchs in Genesis these days but both Isaac and Jacob are mentioned here. If you read Genesis 27, you will see how Isaac wanted to give his eldest son Esau the blessing that was due to him. Through some devious trickery by Rebekah (Isaac’s wife) and Jacob (his younger son), Jacob ends up with the birthright. The one thing Isaac wanted to do was to pass on his blessing to the next generation and it was his faith (learned from his father Abraham) that convinced him that God’s work must go on.

1. In this atmosphere of deceit, how is it possible Isaac could bless both of his sons?

Have you experienced a situation where God has convinced you that your faith will see you through, despite the machinations of devious human beings?

It gets a bit simpler after this. Jacob, despite his earlier trickery, knows that God’s blessing must be kept going into the following generations. In Genesis 48:8 to 22 we see him blessing the sons of Joseph. Joseph, himself, at the end of his life was insistent that his bones were carried back to the land promised to Abraham even though most of his life has been spent in Egypt (Genesis 50:25).

1. At this stage in the patriarchal period, God’s people were no more than one family.

Why was it so important that God’s blessing was passed to the next generation?

Does this suggest how passionate we should be about the next generation hearing the truth about God (see Psalm 78:4).

In each of these events the person of faith looks to the future – are we too bound up with our present needs to look for God’s leading in the future?

The rest of this section deals with the faithful people of the Exodus. Moses has already been lauded in Chapter 3:1 to 6 where his life is given as an example of ‘servant faithfulness’ who fulfilled his duty to God as leader of the Israelites. Moses was highly thought of by Greek-speaking Jews in the 1st century as one who was especially close to God.

The author’s treatment of Moses begins with the faith of his parents. Moses’ subsequent saving acts would not have happened without faithful parents. He did not identify with the house of Pharoah. He chose to be identified with the people of God.

1. What are the lessons of these events for us today?

Do we have parents to whom we should be grateful?

Are we prepared to stand against a strong prevailing culture?

Do we unashamedly make it clear that we are Christians?

The deliverance of God’s people from Egypt remains a significant event in Jewish history to this day. Passover is still strictly observed in Jewish homes – if not in Israel, then the celebration concludes with the phrase ‘next year in Jerusalem’. Of course, the Passover is a beautiful picture of what happened to Jesus - the shedding of the blood of the lamb was a sacrifice to SAVE GOD’S PEOPLE and that is how we see the cross.

Take a look at the courage of Moses’ departure from Egypt. He didn’t ‘fear the King’s anger’. He persevered and looked forward to the Promised land. But how fearful must he have been when faced with Pharoah’s army coming straight at him. (Exodus 13:17 to 14:31). This was surely a supreme act of faith.

1. Is it easy for us to be terrified of the consequences of facing up to those who try to threaten our faith?

Have you ever faced a ‘Red Sea’ moment when things look pretty grim?

The events around Jericho are very dramatic – not often do we see an entire city wall collapse (there is good archaeological evidence that this actually happened). These two verses are about Joshua although he isn’t mentioned. Another massive act of faith is to be told to walk around a city seven times and then blow all the trumpets – not an obvious way to take a city but God’s way which must be obeyed ‘by faith’.

Rahab’s faith is remarkable and you see it in her confession in Joshua 2:9 when she says ‘I know the Lord has given this land to you’. Even she recognised that the God of the Israelites was greater than any Canaanite gods.

1. Have you ever been in a situation where God seems to be leading you into something you can’t make sense of?

Do you find the inclusion of Rahab in the story of God’s people surprising? If you want another surprise look at Matthew 1:5 to see her name in the lineage that leads to Jesus.

**All the characters in this section were called to move into the future trusting God ‘by faith’.**

**During the week take a look at your journey of faith and examine how you view your own future.**

**Do you trust God for anything that might happen in your life?**