

HEBREWS 11:35-40

The way we live as Christians reflects our concept of God. Scripture speaks over and over of the goodness of God. In Mark 10:18 Jesus says that, "**No one is good except God alone.**" In the Bible there are numerous references to God's goodness, yet we often live our lives as if we doubt His goodness. With the belief that God is good comes the realization that in any given situation "...there is nothing that perfect goodness coupled with absolute power should be doing that isn't being done." (Crabb)

Write out Psalm 100:5, which is just one of numerous verses which tell of God's goodness. Then spend some time meditating on the goodness of God.

1. a. What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on God's goodness?
- b. Name some circumstances in your own life, or occurrences in the world, which might cause you to question the goodness of God.

Memorize Romans 8:18. Write it out here and during the week recite it to someone.____

Let's begin our study by reading Hebrews 10:32-11:40 and re-reading the introduction in Lesson 1 of this series.

2. a. What types of persecution had some of these believers already encountered according to Hebrews 10:32-34?
 - b. Apparently some were considering going back to Judaism because of the increasing hostility toward Christians. What are they instructed to do in Hebrews 10:35-38?
 - c. How does chapter 11 fit in with the author's flow of thought?
3. Make note of your thoughts, reactions and feelings about the final six verses of Hebrews 11 (verses 35-40).
 4. On another sheet of paper do a brief, simple outline of the major thoughts of Hebrews 11.

Re-read Hebrews 11:35-38.

5. According to tradition, the prophet Isaiah was sawn in two. Of whom might the author be thinking in 11:35a? (II Kings 4:32-36)
6. How might times of persecution such as those described in verses 11:35-38 force you to examine your own commitment to Christ?
7.
 - a. In verse 35b what choice seems to have been given those who were being tortured?
 - b. Why did they choose not to take that option?
8. Note the term "others." No names--just others. What is encouraging about the fact that the unknown and the anonymous, who persevered in the midst of suffering, are commended for their faith as well as those who were famously triumphant?
9. According to both Hebrews 11:2 and 11:39 what did the saints of old gain by the exercise of their faith in God?

Note: Our faith does not increase God's love for us. Nothing can do that. He loves us unconditionally. He loves us no matter what we say or do. However, when we live by faith it pleases Him; He approves. The Greek word for faith is "pistis" which means faith, trust, confidence. Everything for which the Old Testament saints were commended was done by faith. They were God-reliant people. Every battle won, every persecution faced was done so by faith. **It is extremely important to remember that persecution was faced in exactly the same way a ferocious lion or a foreign army was.**

10.
 - a. What thoughts in Hebrews 11:13-16 helped Abraham, Sarah and Noah to persevere by faith?
 - b. What thought enabled Moses to choose as he did in verse 26?
 - c. Again, what thought motivated those who were tortured in verse 35 to endure?

"Faith is a combination of belief and behavior which demonstrates an eternal perspective, sure enough of the future to live differently now."

11. Do you have an eternal perspective? If so, how does it influence your life?
12. What thought in each of the following verses might encourage you or a loved one in a time of temptation, difficulty or persecution?
- Matthew 5:11-12
- Luke 12:4-5
- John 3:16
- Romans 8:37-39
- Hebrews 12:2-4
- James 1:2-4, 12
- Revelation 21:1-4, 22-27
13. a. Who is it that enables us to live by faith both in the good and in the difficult times? (See Hebrews 13:20-21 and Philippians 2:13.)
- b. What is our part? (Matthew 22:37-40, Hebrews 12:1-2)

Re-read Hebrews 11:39-40 slowly and reflectively several times.

The content of the promise (11:39) is undefined but considering that most of the preceding ten chapters deal with the supremacy of Christ and considering the verses that follow, we can conclude the promise concerns Jesus. In the Old Testament, faith is characterized by a person's willingness to wait for the promises of God to come. In the New Testament faith means following the "Promised One." Jesus is the One who was promised. In Him, all the promises are or will be fulfilled. In Him, the head of the serpent was crushed (Genesis 3:15); and in Him, all the families of the earth are blessed (Genesis 12:3). He is the root of Jesse, the descendant of David, whose kingdom will never end (II Samuel 7:16). He was pierced that we might be forgiven and redeemed (Isaiah 53). Even His very name is a promise, "the Lord saves" (Luke 1:31).

14. What was the "something better" that God had planned for us? That question might be restated: how is life better for those under the "New Covenant"?
- Hebrews 1:1-4
- Hebrews 2:14-18

Hebrews 4:14-16

Hebrews 7:25-27

Hebrews 9:27-28

Hebrews 10:19-21

The word "perfect" is used nine times in Hebrews. We are instructed that the Law never made anyone perfect (7:19, 10:1) nor could one's conscience be made perfect by the offering of gifts and sacrifices (9:9).

15. What do you think is meant in verse 40 by the phrase, "apart from us they should not be made perfect? (NASB)

In this chapter we are told about various individuals who lived by faith. Some were victorious, but others were oppressed or tortured.

16. What does it mean to you that God is so honest and straightforward in telling us about all these people?

Read Hebrews 11:35-40 one more time.

Faith is not an abstract idea that God is somewhat good and trustworthy. We are confident in His goodness because He has proved His goodness toward us by dying for us.

17. How can knowledge of God's goodness help you as you face an unknown future in an uncertain world?

18. Why is the exhortation to "hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" (10:23) and to "live by faith" (10:38) as timely today as when it was written?

We are more privileged than were the Old Testament believers. They lived before the cross and yet they persevered in times of victory and in times of trial. However, we live in the full and glorious revelation of the cross.....

19. How does this fact challenge you?

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