

Hebrews 11

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered himself faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained

and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

I. Foundations of Faith

Notes: _____

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.

II. Faithful Examples

Notes: _____

Maya Angelou

“Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good.”

III. Honorable Legacies

Notes: _____

10 Famous Christian Martyrs of History

by David Peach

Stephen

Acts chapters 6 and 7 give us the account of Stephen's martyrdom. Stephen is considered one of the first Christian martyrs after Christ himself.

Stephen was speaking the truth of Jesus Christ. However, his words offended the listeners. They put together a council that brought false-witness to the things Stephen was saying (*Acts 6:11-13*). Stephen proclaimed that God's own people were at fault for suppressing the prophets' call to righteousness. They even killed the Holy One, Jesus Christ.

Their reaction was to gnash on him with their teeth. They ran Stephen out of the city and stoned him. Yet Stephen patiently accepted the persecution that was given to him. Stephen asked the Lord not to hold them guilty who had stoned him. He essentially repeated Christ's words on the cross.

Andrew

Andrew was one of the first disciples of Christ. He was previously a disciple of John (*John 1:40*). Andrew was the brother of the boisterous Simon Peter. After the biblical record of Andrew's life, he went on to preach around the Black Sea and was influential in starting several churches. He was the founder of the church in Byzantium or Constantinople.

Tradition says that Andrew was crucified on an X shaped cross on the northern coast of Peloponnese. Early writings state that the cross was actually a Latin cross like the one Jesus was crucified upon. But the traditional story says that Andrew refused to be crucified in the same manner as Christ because he was not worthy.

Simon Peter

Brought to Christ by his brother Andrew, Peter is known as the disciple who spoke often before he thought. After Christ's death Peter was the fiery preacher prominently seen in the first half of the book of Acts. He founded the church at Antioch and traveled preaching mainly to Jews about Jesus Christ.

Peter was martyred under Nero's reign. He was killed in Rome around the years 64 to 67. Tradition holds that he was crucified upside down. Like Andrew, his brother, he is said to have refused to be crucified in the same manner as Christ because he was unworthy to be executed in the same way as the Lord.

Polycarp

As with many people in the early centuries, Polycarp's exact birth and death dates are not known. Even his date of martyrdom is disputed; though it was sometime between AD 155 and 167. Polycarp was probably a disciple of the Apostle John who wrote the books of the Gospel of John, the three Epistles of John and the book of Revelation. Polycarp may have been one of the chief people responsible for compiling the New Testament of the Bible that we have today.

Because of his refusal to burn incense to the Roman Emperor he was sentenced to burn at the stake. Tradition says that the flames did not kill him so he was stabbed to death.

Wycliffe

Known as “The Morning Star of the Reformation,” John Wycliffe was a 14th century theologian. He is probably best remembered as a translator of scriptures. He believed that the Bible should be available to the people in their common tongue. He translated the Latin Vulgate into common English.

He was persecuted for his stand against Papal authority. While he was not burned at the stake as a martyr, his persecution extended beyond his death. His body was exhumed and burned along with many of his writings. The Anti-Wycliffe Statute of 1401 brought persecution to his followers and specifically addressed the fact that there should not be any translation of Scripture into English.

John Huss

Huss was a Czech priest who was burned at the stake for heresy against the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Particularly he fought against the doctrines of Ecclesiology and the Eucharist as taught by the Roman Catholic Church. He was an early reformer living before the time of Luther and Calvin (other well-known reformers of Roman Catholicism).

Huss was martyred on July 6, 1415. He refused to recant his position of the charges that were brought against him. On the day he died he is said to have stated, *“God is my witness that the things charged against me I never preached. In the same truth of the Gospel which I have written, taught, and preached, drawing upon the sayings and positions of the holy doctors, I am ready to die today.”*

William Tyndale

Most known for his translation of the Bible into English, William Tyndale was a reformer who stood against many teachings of the Catholic Church and opposed King Henry VIII’s divorce, which was one of the major issues in the Reformation. Tyndale’s English translation of the Bible was the first to draw significantly from the original languages.

Tyndale was choked to death while tied to the stake and then his dead body was burned. The date of commemoration of Tyndale’s martyrdom is October 6, 1536 but he probably died a few weeks earlier than that.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed on June 9, 1945. I hesitated to include Bonhoeffer in this list because he was not martyred strictly for his Christian beliefs. He was executed because of his involvement in the July 20 plot to kill Adolf Hitler. Bonhoeffer staunchly opposed Hitler's treatment of the Jews. As a Christian pastor he could not sit idly by and watch the murder of so many men and women.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged just two weeks before soldiers from the United States liberated the concentration camp in which he was held.

Jim Elliot and Four Missionary Friends

Jim Elliot, along with four of his missionary colleagues was killed on January 8, 1956 while trying to establish contact with the Auca Indians in Ecuador (now known as the Waodani people). Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Pete Flemming and Roger Youderian had been working to make friendly contact with the Auca tribe which they had seen from the air. Though they had only met one tribesman face to face, they had participated in trades with the Auca from a plane to ground system. When Elliot and his friends landed on a river beach on that fateful January day they were slaughtered by the waiting men.

Their deaths were not in vain though. The widows continued to try and make peaceful contact and eventually won the hearts of the tribe. God has used this recent missionary martyr story to inspire new generations of missionaries willing to give their lives for what they believe.

Nag Hammadi Massacre

On the night of January 7, 2010 a group of eight Egyptian Christians were killed as they left their church after celebrating a Christmas mass in Nag Hammadi, Egypt. The motive behind the massacre is disputed, but it was carried out by militant Islamic believers. It may have been done in retaliation for an alleged crime against a Muslim girl by a Christian man. Even if that was the reason, the retaliation was not targeted at the man who committed the crime but at Christians because of their association through religion.

This type of martyrdom happens in many parts of the world today. There are still wars being fought on small and large scales because Christians hold strongly to their beliefs. The Christians are not the aggressors in most cases. They are being targeted because of their religion.

Read more: <https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/10-famous-christian-martyrs/#ixzz5GWT1OkFD>