

# (Hebrews - Part 38): Heroes of Faith

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer's sermon highlights the diversity of faith among biblical heroes and encourages believers to embrace their unique journeys in serving God.*

**Duration:** 22:16

**Scripture:** Genesis 5:24, Genesis 6:8, Genesis 8:22, Genesis 12:1-3, Ezra 7:10, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 11:4

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of listening to God and understanding His high expectations for us. He encourages the audience to put away sin, separate themselves from the world, and offer themselves to God in faith. The preacher reminds the audience that God accepts the poor in spirit, regardless of their background. He prays for God's blessing and asks for the word to come alive in their hearts. The preacher also mentions the examples of Ezra and Paul, who emphasized the importance of reading and preaching the word of God. He concludes by highlighting the importance of faith, obedience, and love, and encourages the audience to be alive and active in their faith rather than being spiritually dead.

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## Transcript

Let's offer prayer before I speak. Our Father, we thank Thee for the good songs of Zion. Thank Thee for the psalms.

Thank Thee for the presence of praying people. Thank Thee for the life that enables us to be present here and the health that allows us to gather with the children of the King in the house of the Lord. Pray now Thy blessing, O Lord, upon us as we hear the word expounded.

You remember Ezra, who read the word and made them to understand the meaning of it. Remember the words of Thy servant Paul, who said, Preach the word, the instant in season and out of season. Now Thyself, O Lord, did say, Give them their meat in due season.

O Lord, it is quiet and peaceful, and there is no war, no epidemic, no tragic accident in nature. O man-made, we are very much at peace here this morning on this corner, but we live not for now, we live for eternity. We would speak and listen as those who shall soon give account of the deeds done in the body.

Help us, Father, we beseech Thee, through Christ Jesus Thy Son, help us. May the word come alive to our hearts, may we obey and believe, bring ourselves into harmony with the truth. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Now, like a man who has found a treasure, a treasure that is legitimately his, and who returns to it a thousand times and examines it and counts it and feels it and looks at it, so do we with these words by faith, by faith, by faith. Here is the mighty triumph sound of God's people. By faith they did this, showing that faith is not an imaginary thing, but that it is dynamic and powerful and accomplishes things indeed.

Now note here how these people differed. A whole list of them is given in the passage I read, but a longer list goes back to the man Abel in verse 4, followed by Enoch and then Noah and then Abraham, and so on down the list. Notice how they differed from each other.

One of the snares of the Christian life is that we have a feeling that we all ought to be exactly alike, that God intended his people to be precisely the same, whereas God made us very much different from each other. It is said, and I don't know whether it's true, I have examined the mulberry tree and I have found that on the mulberry tree there are not any two leaves that are alike. I have examined them carefully more than one time, and they say the same thing is true of all of the trees of the wood.

No two leaves are alike on any tree in the forest anywhere. Now, I suppose that if you were to look at the roses or the tulips or anything else, you would find that no two of them were alike. And I think that if you were to look at the people of the world, you would find no two are alike.

We had near to our church in Chicago a couple of young girls, little girls, they grew up to be big girls, and they were identical twins. That is, they were said to be identical. The biologists know exactly what they mean when they say that, but what we know about identical twins is that they look precisely alike and nobody can tell them apart, they say.

It was Irene and Eileen Booth. Well, as they grew up from little tiny toddlers that staggered around on the sidewalk in front of their house, and I used to see them as I'd go by and stop and chat with them, I got so I knew them apart. They were identical twins, but I knew Eileen from Irene.

I could tell them. There are no two people alike in the whole wide world. No two people alike.

Some people that have never seen Chinese, say. To the person who's never seen Chinese people, all Chinese look alike for a while, and after a while you get to see the difference. Same with the colored people.

You see colored people and they all look alike if you've never seen them before. But when you're around them a few weeks, you begin to notice the distinctions. Now, I've made a little case here for the fact that the Lord doesn't repeat himself, but that he is an artist and does things in his own way and makes things different from each other, and he makes people differ to differ from each other.

So you won't find two people in the Bible who are exactly alike. Take, for instance, Abraham and his grandson Jacob. I guess you couldn't think of two men more widely separated in temperament.

Abraham was a fine, dignified old gentleman who never vowed to do anything that wasn't proper, and you'd like him. He was a fine old gentleman, and you'd like to have known Abraham. But his grandson Jacob was quite another character altogether.

He was the supplanter, and he was always everlastingly doing sort of embarrassing things and things that weren't nice at all and weren't good. Until the Lord made him into Israel, he was anything but a savory character. And yet God puts Jacob along with Abraham, because God was busy making Saints out of both of them.

They were not alike, but they were alike in one thing, in that they believed in God and they had faith. Then there was Joseph and Moses. Joseph was one of the gentlest of all men.

You can't find a man gentler than Joseph. He didn't get angry with his brothers. When they came down into Egypt, he wept before them.

He was a gentle man, not a gentleman, but a gentle man, a man of gentleness. Then there was Moses. Moses was not like Joseph at all.

Moses was a man of fiery temper. He flew into a rage and flew an Egyptian, and later on he smoked a rock and said, Rebels! He was a man that wasn't gentle. But Joseph was a gentle man, and yet God came to Joseph and blessed him, and he came to Moses and blessed him.

Then we can come to Sarah and Rahab, both mentioned here in the 11th chapter. Sarah was a good woman, a woman against whom there is not a blot, and Rahab was a harlot. And yet both had faith and both were converted and both regenerated and both blessed.

So we have God working in his Spirit to bless and honor the differences in men as well as the likenesses in men. God accepts different personalities and manifests himself to them. Just as on a Christmas tree you run 120 volts of electricity into the trimmings of the tree, and you have red lights and yellow lights and blue lights and green lights and white lights, yet it's the same amount of electricity flowing through the filament that makes the light.

It's a different light, but it's the same power. So the Lord makes his people different. And I'm glad we're not all alike.

We can talk enthusiastically about a brother and love him and write his last story, but we wouldn't want other people. My wife and I are reading the letters of Samuel Rutherford. I refer to it sometimes.

I guess we're in about close to 500 pages now that we've read in it. And he was a wonderful Scotsman, there's no question about it. But it seems to me that a church filled with Samuel Rutherford's would be a bit hard to live in.

And so with almost anybody that I know, we can talk about Billy Sunday and Holy Ann and so on, but when it's through, it's variety that makes beauty and interest, and not similarity, particularly not stereotype similarity. So let's not try to be like our heroes. Let's not try to be like Moody or somebody else.

I do hope that there won't be a lot of young fellows who get the idea that they can be like Billy Graham, because in the days of Billy Sunday's great usefulness and his big ministry, so many people were trying to be like Billy Sunday. And all they managed to do was copy his eccentricities. They never managed to get his power nor his usefulness.

And so if I'm tempted to copy anybody that I admire as a Christian, their natural eccentricities never their spirituality. So don't try to be like anybody, except as we must all be alike, we're to be different. Now I

notice here from what I have read and in this whole chapter, that God does nothing that he will not do again.

Anything he did for any of his people, he will do for any of the rest of his people if they'll only believe. He will do in belief and faith for us now what he did for anybody. See, unbelief is very subtle.

You read the life of a great Saint and you become discouraged because of the unfavorable comparison between you and that great Saint. That is one thing I keep away from in some measure. Sometimes I can be greatly harmed by reading the lives of the Saints.

I do read the lives of the Saints and I recommend biography, but you've got to know how you do it. Don't spend all your time reading the lives of the Saints, because if you do, the comparison between the great Saints and you will be so unfavorable that you will be deeply discouraged. Don't become discouraged because you are you and they are they.

And if your life was to be written and they read it, no doubt they would shake their heads and say, I wish I could. Well, put those weakening thoughts away, because faith comes to persons morally different. Faith came like a dove to the hearts of men, of Abraham, but not Abraham only, Jacob too.

Faith came to Moses and faith came to Samson. Faith came to Sarah and faith came to Rahab. The old little old song they used to sing is, let not conscience make you linger, nor of fitness fondly dream.

All the fitness he requires is to feel your need of him. And if I feel my need of him, I don't have to look at myself and wonder if because I am not like D. L. Moody or A. B. Simpson, I am not going to be a good Christian. Some dear old Saints hinder pastors unintentionally, because they've had a pastor somewhere.

There was a great Saint and they liked him very well, and they appreciated him and admired him and emulated him. And then he dies or retires or moves away and a new man comes in, and the new fellow has an awful time. Because the old Saints just can't pardon him because he's not like the old fellow.

They learn through the sound of the old man's voice and the scarcity of his hair and the awkwardness of his motions. And they came unintentionally and unconsciously to equate spirituality with boldness. Or gray hair, at least.

Then the young fellow comes in and he's got nothing like that wrong with him. He has all his hair yet and his voice is smooth and he moves with a lot of ease and grace. No, he couldn't be spiritual.

He couldn't be because he's not like dear old Dr. So-and-so. Watch that, my brethren, because God blesses people for their faith, not for the amount of hair they have. He blesses them for their faith, not because they're older, because they're young.

He blesses them for their faith, not because their voice is pleasant or gravely. And so let's remember that and not get in the way of the Saints. You go to some Alliance churches and you'll find dear old people who will come and stare at you and announce, I heard Dr. Simpson.

I've never said what I thought in a case like that. I've been too nice. But sometimes I like to say what I thought, really.

You know, somebody ought to give an answer to that. I heard Dr. Simpson. I was at Old Orchard.

Oh, bless her. She was at Old Orchard. Well, there are Saints now as well as there were then, and usually the ones that are Saints don't call themselves Saints, except theologically, and don't know that they are.

But they're a great blessing to people nevertheless. You see, we can be in our day what these old heroes were in theirs, and they didn't know that they were heroes. For instance, a simple little thing like this, it's not to call myself a hero, we're just together here as Christians, but it's to say, a little thing you do, a little thing you do, may bless people that you don't dream of.

Now, I talked with, or rather he testified, it was in a testimony meeting, he testified in the Lutheran group up there. There were quite several hundred of them, a couple of thousand at night, I understand. I didn't preach at night, I preached in the daytime to have on the Holy Spirit.

And of course there were fewer people, but there were still hundreds. And one man said, a fine young chap told me, he was 41 years old, Lutheran pastor. He said that he carried with him in his Bible a little thing called the prayer of a minor prophet.

I remember writing that, I guess, 15 years ago. The prayer of a minor prophet. And he said, when I get discouraged or get in trouble, I open my Bible and I read the prayer of a minor prophet.

Well, now I suppose his idea of the man who would write the prayer of a minor prophet was very much inflated, far beyond my wife's idea of the same man, or my son's, or my own, or yours. But he didn't know me, and he pictured me as something unusual, because I'd written that. And yet it was blessing him, it was blessing him.

And if he wanted an illustration, no doubt he'd talk about that man. Just as when I wanted an illustration, I'd talk about somebody that I don't know so well, but that's blessed me and helped me. Maybe if I knew him as well as his wife, I'd be a bit more cautious.

But the point is, we can be in our day what those Saints were in theirs. And while the Lord wants us to be holy and Spirit-filled, he doesn't expect us all to look like Abraham, or play a harp like David. He expects us to have the same faith, the same obedience, and the same love, and after that we're on our own, more or less.

One thing is sure, they are dead, and one thing is sure, we are alive. So remember, dear friends, that it is better to be a living dog than to be a dead lion. Because the living dog is alive, but the dead lion, though he be a lion, he is dead.

And I would rather be the little dog toser than to be the lion Abraham. Because Abraham has been asleep these centuries, but I'm still around, still able to testify, and I start to sing, but you'll excuse that. But at least I am able to pray and witness and preach and labor and give of my substance and help people and encourage people and meet them and talk with them on the phone, in person.

I am still here where Abraham sleeps, so I would rather be me alive than to be Abraham dead. Better a living dog than a dead lion. That's a proverb, as you know, from the Bible itself.

So they fell asleep and they rest with the honored dead. Now, when the Lord comes, we'll not all be rewarded the like, because there are some people who deserve more than others under God's grace, and they will get it. But in the of faith, and if we never rise to their level, and thank God, at least we rose as high as we did.

And it may be that some of God's present-day people will rise as high as some of the people here in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. And if another 11th chapter of Hebrews was written, there would be people in it that you would scarcely believe are in it. People here with Abraham.

What was she doing in there? She was a harlot, but she believed God and turned hard to faith. There was Gideon, and there was Barak, and there was Samson. He wasn't as perfect as he might have been, but he believed.

So you'd find some people in that you didn't think might be in, because the heroes of faith are not all dead. And if you will believe God in the midst of an ungodly world and will walk with the Lord in this time as they walked with the Lord in their time, you will deserve a place, too, when the Lord writes his final 11th chapter of Hebrews, if he does write another one. One thing I'd like to have you remember is that when these old Saints died, God didn't die with them.

It says, And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, God said, God didn't die, but after the death of Moses, God said to Joshua. And after the death of Joshua, God said, after the death of his great hero, God still lives. He's living, and he's laboring, and he's working, and he's hearing prayer.

And the God of Abraham lives today, and the God of Rahab lives today, to encourage every poor fallen sister off the street that might want to believe on the Son of God. And Samson lives today to encourage every man who's made his failures, but who is ready to repent and come back. And Jephthah, and David, and Samuel, and all the rest of them, the God of these men lives now.

And he will not let himself be without a witness. You can be sure of that. He will have men and women in 1962 AD, the same as he had in 1962 B.C. Well, how do you know what high, happy secret God wants to whisper to your heart? How do you know? How do you know what God wants to say, what high expectations he's entertaining for you? How do you know? If only you will listen.

If only you will do these three things, put away sin, separate yourself from the world, and offer yourself to God in faith, you'll do those three things, you don't know what God may yet do for them that trust him. God receives the poor in spirit, no matter what kind of people they are. If they have the dignity of Abraham, or the embarrassed kind of way of living that Jacob did, whether they be the pure old sister like Sarah, whether they be the shady character as Rahab was, whether they be the man of a high temper like Moses, or the humble, simple, meek man like Joseph, God has his plans for you.

He will work in you, he will cleanse you and deliver you from your temper, and he'll deliver Rahab from her wickedness, and he'll deliver David from his sin. He's a deliverer, and he receives the poor in spirit. The only soul permanently blind is the one who thinks it sees, and the only soul incurably sick is the one who thinks it's well.

The only soul hopelessly bad is the one who insists it's good. The only one that'll never be clean is the one who insists it is clean. The man who comes before the Lord God saying, I am blind, O God, heal my blindness.

I am sick, O God, heal my sickness. I am unclean, O Lord, cleanse thou me. He will find the Lord the sight-giver, the healer, the cleanser, the purifier, and the helper of his people.

So let's thank God for the heroes of faith, and let's remember they're dead. But they left their testimony behind them for the next generation, and the next, and the next. You are alive.

Your generation is everywhere about you. You must serve your generation by the will of God before you fall asleep. You can do that.

You can't serve theirs, you can only serve yours. Serve yours, and then leave your reputation and your service in the kind hand of God. And when the right day comes, he may put your name with the heroes of faith and say, by faith he, by faith she.

Whether he does or not, at least we will have the delight of knowing we pleased him and the joy of knowing we served our generation. May God bless his word to our hearts. Amen.

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