

WHEN FAITH BECOMES OUR SUPERPOWER (Hebrews 11:20-31)

We used to only read about them in comic books. Now, we see them on the big screen, our TV screen, and on our mobile devices. I am talking about super heroes. Of course, what makes them super heroes is that they possess super-powers.

- The Flash possesses superhuman speed.
- Captain America has superhuman strength, agility, and stamina. Plus, he has an indestructible shield.
- Peter Parker, also known as Spiderman can shoot webs from his wrist and swing through downtown NYC like an urban Tarzan.
- Superman is able to fly, has superhuman strength, and he has X-ray vision. Also, he is able to conceal his true identity just by putting on a pair of glasses and acting like a nerd. I think that is pretty amazing, too.
- Batman doesn't really have a superpower, but he is super rich; so, he can afford really cool gadgets and modes of transportation. He can also talk in a really deep voice.

If you could have a superpower, what would you choose? I would go with flying so that I wouldn't have to wait at airports or deal with TSA agents.

In Hebrews 11 we have a list of super heroes, and we are told of the super heroic things they did. Interestingly, each of those super heroes in Hebrews 11 possessed the same super-power. So far, we have looked at Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah. Today, as we continue our journey through this passage, we will look at some more luminaries who also distinguished themselves by their faith, which was their superpower.

What makes these people different from others is not what they said and maybe not even what they believed. What made them super-heroic is what they did. They exercised their faith. They put what they believed into action, and that is exactly what you and I need to do.

Today, we are going to look at what happens when faith becomes our superpower. From our text, Hebrews 11:20-31, I see five things that can happen and will happen when we allow faith to guide our actions.

When Faith Becomes Our Superpower, We Will Look Forward

Notice 11:20-22. Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph looked forward. They saw not simply what was but rather what would be.

Years ago, I preached a sermon on these three verses, and I entitled the sermon, "A Faith That Helps Us Die Well." We need not only a faith that helps us live well but also one that enables us to die well. If you don't have a faith that prepares you to die victoriously, you have a deficient faith.

In Genesis 27 we discover that Isaac blesses Jacob. Now that blessing should have

gone to the first born, but Jacob was the second born. What physical handicap did Isaac have that Jacob used to trick his father into blessing him? Blindness.

In Genesis 48 Jacob is now old, and he chooses to bless his grandchildren, namely Joseph sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Guess what physical malady Jacob has. We are told that “his eyes were dim with age” (48:10).

Even though these patriarchs couldn’t see who they were blessing, they saw something more important. One man wrote, “They saw the future. The present was a blur, but they could see the future because they believed God’s promises.”

The same was true of Joseph. When Joseph was alive, not a single Hebrew served as a slave to the Egyptians. The Hebrews were well-treated because of Joseph’s sake. The exodus would not happen for another 400 years.

Nevertheless, Joseph saw with the eyes of faith. As he was dying, Joseph gave both a promise and instructions as to what were to be done with his remains. Those instructions were firmly based on the promise. Listen to Genesis 50:24-25:

²⁴ “Soon I will die,” Joseph told his brothers, “But God will surely come to help you and lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land He solemnly promised to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath, and he said, “When God comes to help you and lead you back, you must take my bones with you” (NLT).

Let me bring that story full circle to its conclusion. We read in the second to last verse of Joshua: “As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought . . .” (Joshua 24:32).

It is clear that the people remembered Joseph’s words, and those words should have been an encouragement to them. He knew that one day God would come to their aid. Egypt was not their home. God had promised them a land, and one day that land would be theirs.

Do you have a heroic faith? Are you able to look beyond your present circumstances and see what God intends for your life to be? We need to look forward in full expectation that God is going to show His goodness to his people.

Many years ago, I was in my office, preparing for a funeral I would conduct later in the day. As I was preparing my message, a song came to my mind. I looked it up on the internet. Here are some of the lyrics. The song was sung by a lady named Pam Thum. Some of you may have heard it.

Life is hard, the world is cold
We’re barely young and then we’re old
But every falling tear is always understood
Yes, life is hard, but God is good

When faith is your superpower, you are able to look forward knowing and expecting God to show His goodness, to make good on His promises, and to see you through.

When Faith Becomes Our Superpower, We Will Worship God

Look at what Jacob did in v. 21. In addition to looking forward in expectation, he looked upward in adoration.

Faith will enable us to worship well. What is most important is not what we are going through. What is most important is the One who will see us through, and He is to be praised.

The verb of v. 21 is the word “blessed.” That is what Jacob did. But there are two words that help us to understand what was taking place while Jacob blessed. First, he was dying, and second, he was bowing in worship. He wasn’t going to let the first get in the way of the second.

I have told this story before, but let me tell it again. It was originally told by Festo Kivengere, a bishop from Uganda. In 1973 three men from his diocese were to be executed by a firing squad. Listen to his account:

February 10th began as a sad day for us in Kabale. People were commanded to come to the stadium and witness the execution. Death permeated the atmosphere. A silent crowd of about three thousand were there to watch. I had permission from the authorities to speak to the men before they died, and two of my fellow ministers were with me.

They brought the men in a truck and unloaded them. They were handcuffed and their feet were chained. The firing squad stood at attention. As we walked into the center of the stadium, I was wondering what to say. How do you give the gospel to doomed men who are probably seething with rage?

We approached them from behind, and as they turned to look at us, what a sight! Their faces were all alight with an unmistakable glow and radiance.

Before we could say anything, one of them burst out: “Bishop, thank you for coming! I wanted to tell you. The day I was arrested, in my prison cell, I asked the Lord Jesus to come into my heart. He came in and forgave me all my sins! Heaven is now open, and there is nothing between me and my God! Please tell my wife and children that I am going to be with Jesus. Ask them to accept him into their lives as I did.”

The other two men told similar stories, excitedly raising their hands which rattled their handcuffs.

I felt that what I needed to do was to talk to the soldiers, not to the condemned. So, I translated what the men had said into a language the soldiers understood. The military men were standing there with guns cocked and bewilderment on their faces. They were so dumbfounded that they forgot to put the hoods over the men’s faces! The three faced the firing squad standing close together. They looked toward the people and began to wave, handcuffs and all. The people waved back. Then shots were fired, and the three were with Jesus.

We stood in front of them, our own hearts throbbing with joy, mingled with tears. It was a day never to be forgotten. Though dead, the men spoke loudly to all

of Kigezi District and beyond, so that there was an upsurge of life in Christ, which challenges death and defeats it.

The next Sunday, I was preaching to a huge crowd in the hometown of one of the executed men. Again, the feel of death was over the congregation. But when I gave them the testimony of their man, and how he died, there erupted a great song of praise to Jesus! Many turned to the Lord there.

When we live life with heroic faith we will look forward and we will worship God for who He is, for what He has done, is doing, and will do.

There is a third thing that we will do when faith is our superpower.

When Faith Becomes Our Superpower, We Will Evict Fear

Look at v. 23 and v. 27. What did the parents of Moses not fear? What was the king's edict?

What did Moses not fear in v. 27? Why was the king angry? According to Exodus 2, Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. Moses became angry. He killed the Egyptian and hid his body, but he wasn't able to hide the truth of his crime. There was an eye-witness. We read in v. 15 of that chapter, "When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses." Of course, Moses fled from Egypt, and he stayed away for 40 years until God told him to go back. The author of Hebrews says that it wasn't fear that forced Moses to leave Egypt; it was faith in God.

A wise man once said, "If you displease God, it doesn't matter who you do please, and if you please God it doesn't matter who you do displease."

Those with heroic faith are intent on pleasing God, not others. Why do you think we spend so much time and energy trying to please people? I think it is fear.

The good news is that faith displaces fear. Faith and fear are mutually exclusive. One cannot reside where the other is. I am not saying that you will never face fear or feel fear. What I am saying is that faith is stronger than fear, and faith will win the day.

We read in 1 John 5:4, "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith."

We need to let go of trying to make everybody happy. Now, I do think that if we spend the time and effort needed to walk close with God and live in obedience to Him, we will be better husbands, wives, parents, employees, citizens, etc., and others will benefit from that, but our singular focus should be living in obedience to God and pleasing Him.

When Faith Becomes Our Super Power, We Will Decide Well

John MacArthur wrote, "Life is made up of decisions . . . The course and quality of our lives are determined more by our decisions than by our circumstances."

I think few people understand that. Most people who are unhappy look at their circumstances, and they think that it is their unhappy circumstances that are making them unhappy. That is not true. That's not the case.

The Bible teaches that joy is a fruit of the Spirit. If we will focus on letting the Holy Spirit guide our decisions and actions, He will grow joy and other fruit in the soil of our lives. It starts with decisions.

In v. 23, Moses' parents made an important decision. In vv. 24-26, Moses made an important decision.

A good decision is one that says *no* to the world and *yes* to God.

Consider the case of Baron Justinian von Weltz. He was the son of an Austrian nobleman born in the first half of the 17th century. He lived a very self-indulgent life, but when he was 40, he heard the gospel, and God got ahold of his life.

He began to take an interest in missions. He gave to mission causes. He sought to establish a missionary sending organization, but the Lutheran Church of which he was a member believed that the need for missions died with the apostles. They sought to discourage his efforts to support missions.

When few supported what he sought to do, he decided to go on his own. He renounced his title and gave up his estate in order to go to Dutch Guiana as a missionary. He left in 1666. It is believed that he died in 1668.

Today, his body lies in a lonely grave, forgotten by the world. As he was preparing to leave, he said, "What is it to me to bear the title 'well-born' when I am born again to Christ? What is it to me to have the title 'lord' when I desire to be the servant of Christ? What is it to me to be called 'your grace' when I have need of God's grace? All these vanities I will away with and all else I will lay at the feet of my dear Lord Jesus?"

Some might think that Weltz made a bad a decision. He could have stayed, enjoyed his wealth, used some of it to support that work of the church, and lived a long life. Instead, he renounced it. Lived in poverty and died an early death. It is not even known if he ever made a single convert.

What about Moses? He could have retained his title, his position, and his riches. He could have worked from the inside to improve the condition of the Hebrew people.

But that wasn't what God called him to do. There is no substitute for obedience. None.

Heroic faith:

**Looks Forward,
Worships God,
Evicts Fear,
Decides Well.**

And finally . . .

When Faith Becomes Our Super Power, We Will Set the Stage

Sets the stage for what? When we employ faith, we set the stage for God to work, for God to demonstrate His greatness and His grace.

Look at vv. 28-31. All these mentioned in our text—Moses, the people, Rahab—were setting the stage for God to act.

Ruth Ann, Lance, Sarah, and Gemma enjoy drama. In the past, they have participated in local theater productions. From them, I have learned that there is much more involved in putting on a play than selecting people for the various parts and making sure they learn their lines.

Someone has to create sets. Someone has to move those sets on and off the stage at the appropriate time. Someone has to operate the lights and the sound, and do the right thing at the right time.

A person who moves the sets on and off between scenes has an incredibly important job. That person must understand, however, that it not his or her job to entertain the audience. He does not step out from behind the curtain and begin reciting lines. She doesn't begin singing a song. He doesn't pick up an instrument and begin playing. The stagehand sets the stage—nothing more, nothing less.

Likewise, we are not the main performers. It is not our job to do what God alone can do. Our job is to set the stage for God to act.

God always uses human instruments. Remember this: **Without God we can't; without us, God won't.** (Repeat)

Today, we read:

- By faith Isaac . . .
- By faith Jacob . . .
- By faith Joseph . . .
- By faith Moses . . .
- By faith the people . . . and
- By faith Rahab . . .

By faith, they did something. They showed their faith by what they did. By faith, they acted. They looked forward. They worshiped God. They evicted fear. They decided well. And they set the stage.

What is God leading you to do? Teach a class? Share your faith? Increase your giving? Trust Jesus as Savior? Request baptism? Join the church. Establish a daily habit of reading the Bible and praying? Serve Him in a particular way?

What is God calling you to do? By faith, do it. Let faith be your superpower because it will enable you to do things you never could have done without it.