

The Worthy Ones

Introduction. Imagine being described as the Old Testament men and women in Hebrews 11:38: “Of whom the world was not worthy.” These were people who were so good, the world did not deserve their presence.

There is a continual struggle between the Christian and the influence of the world (John 7:7; 15:18-19). The admonitions in Hebrews were written to Jews who were being tempted to go back to Judaism, or a compromised form of Christ’s teachings, in order to stop them! We need the same lessons today when we feel like compromising our faith, doctrine, or morals.

What made them so different than the world and special in God’s sight? It is because they had six qualities that the world did not have.

I. Faith (vv. 1-3, 6)

- A. Faith is conviction, trust, and devotion.
 - 1. It stands beneath what we desire and expect (our hope).
 - 2. Our faith is not a blind faith. It just cannot always be seen right here and now.
- B. Faith is how the righteous lives and endures.
 - 1. Our faith comes from the word of God (Romans 4:1-4).
 - 2. Our faith is our guiding force in this life (2 Corinthians 5:7).
- C. Faith is comprised of three elements:
 - 1. We must believe that there is a God (God’s existence).
 - 2. We must believe that He is a rewarder (God’s ability).
 - 3. We must believe that there is a reward is for those who “seek Him” (our obedience).

II. Message (v. 7)

- A. The message to Noah was not his own — he was divinely warned (Genesis 6:5-7, 13).
- B. The message was fearful — the world would be destroyed (Genesis 6:5-7, 13).
- C. The message had expectations — build an ark and save your house (Genesis 6:14).
- D. The message condemned many — Noah preached but none believed (2 Peter 2:5)
- E. The message made Noah righteous — his faith and obedience worked together (Genesis 6:8, 22).

III. Hope (vv. 8-16)

- A. They left their homeland and were seeking a city built by God.
- B. They died in faith without receiving the promises.
- C. They were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.
 - 1. They desired the future homeland.
 - 2. They had opportunity to return to their present land but did not.
 - 3. They desired a better, heavenly country.
- D. We will receive a new body (1 Corinthians 15:52-53) and a new city (Revelation 21:2-3). Both are made by God for us to be with God. This is the basis of our hope (Romans 8:24-25).

IV. Obedience (vv. 4-5, 7, 8-10, 11, 17, 20-23, 30-31)

- A. The phrase “by faith” is used 15 times in the chapter. This implies a choice and an expected action that was followed.
- B. “By faith” addresses understanding, offering, preparation, obedience, dwelling, receiving strength to conceive, offering, blessing, giving instructions, not being afraid of the king’s

command, refusing to be called, suffering affliction, forsaking, keeping the Passover, passing through, falling walls, and not perishing.

- C. Every one of these actions were contrary to what the world would do, or did! This is the fundamental point of James's discussion on faith (2:20-26). If we claim to have faith, then obedience is an automatic part of it. They cannot be separated.

V. Power (vv. 32-35)

- A. The world does have "power" in numbers, armies, physical strength, etc., but the power of God is greater. They had a power the world could not have or defeat! What could those who believed in the power of God do?
 1. Subdued kingdoms — David (2 Samuel 8:14-15).
 2. Worked righteousness — calling of fire down by Elijah (1 Kings 18:38).
 3. Obtained promises — fulfilling the land promise with Joshua (Joshua 21:43).
 4. Stopped mouths of lions — Daniel (Daniel 6:22).
 5. Quenched fire — Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3:26).
 6. Escaped the edge of the sword — Elijah running from Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-7).
 7. Weak become strong — Gideon (Judges 7:20-25).
 8. Turned armies — Sennacherib's defeat (2 Kings 19:35).
 9. Women received children — Elisha (2 Kings 4:32-34).
- B. We do not have miraculous abilities today, but we have a power this world does not — the truth (John 8:32; Romans 1:16) and the power of the resurrected Christ (Romans 1:4; Philippians 3:10).

VI. Endurance (vv. 36-40)

- A. Some were willing to suffer terribly even without ever experiencing the aforementioned power because of their steadfast faith in the three elements of v. 6.
- B. Consider how well we are treated and spoiled, yet we still fall away. We need to have strength in ourselves to endure! These faithful people were not a race of superhuman — we can do it because they did it!
- C. The final verse of the chapter shows that the time of the Old Testament people was a time of waiting and anticipation, looking ahead to the coming of Christ. To them belonged the promise; to the saints of the new age belongs the fulfillment.

Conclusion. According to 12:1-4, we have great witnesses around us. So let us lay aside, run with endurance, and look to Jesus. He is the beginner and finisher of faith. He endured more sufferings than all of us. He is now in Heaven reigning because He has conquered and obtained the victory.

While our sufferings are small in comparison, God is working through them to purify us (12:5-11), but the reward will be worth it all! Is the world deserving of us? Would they call us their own? Or does our life show that the world does not deserve people like us and that they need to repent and return to God?

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