

I. Introduction and review.**II. While some triumph in faith, other suffer for their faith. v. 35b-38**

A. After the long list of the victories of faith, our author now presents the trials of the faithful in equal detail.

1. While some escaped the sword, others were put to death by the sword. v. 34b,37d
2. While some received their dead back by resurrection, others died and had to wait for the final resurrection. v. 35

B. The suffering of God's faithful people has been great and intense.

1. They were tortured. v. 35b
2. They were mocked and scourged. v. 36a II Chr. 36:16 Jer. 20:2,7 37:15 38:6 I Ki. 22:24 II Co. 11:23 Isa. 53:3-6 Mt. 27:29ff Mark 15:20ff Luke 23:11 John 19:1
3. They were placed in bonds and prison. v. 36b 10:34 13:3 Jer. 20:37,2 II Ki. 22:26 II Ch. 16:10 Luke 22:54 Acts 8:3 12:4-6 16:23 Eph. 3:1 Phm. 1:1
4. They experienced violent deaths by stoning, being sawn in two, and the sword. v. 37a Mt. 23:37 Luke 11:49-51 Acts 7:52 Jer. 26:20-23 I Ki. 19:10 18:4,13 21:1ff
5. They were tempted. v. 37b
6. They endured prolonged and severe deprivation. v. 37c,38b II Ki. 1:8 Zech. 13:4 Mt. 11:8-9 I Ki. 18:4 19:9 I Sam. 24

C. The original readers were facing the same suffering. 10:32-34 12:4

III. What can we learn from their suffering?

A. Do those who suffer have less faith?

1. Faith does not imply immunity from persecution, suffering, or even death.
2. The life of faith does not always lead to worldly success. v. 37b,38b
3. Some suffered by the same faith by which others conquered. v. 33a
4. Their suffering was an expression of their faith. v. 33a,35a
5. It might be argued that those who suffered had greater faith.
6. Faith is more gloriously displayed in those who continue to trust God while enduring suffering. Job 1:20-21 2:10
7. Jesus suffered in faith. 12:1-3 Isa. 53:11-12

B. Were those who suffered less triumphant?

1. They experienced different kinds of victories as they endured. Rom. 8:37
2. Faith's triumph is not always obvious in the present.
3. Jesus triumphed through His suffering. 2:14 12:2-3 Gen. 3:15

C. Were those who suffered less loved by God?

1. All who have faith are approved (and loved) by God. 11:2,39
2. Suffering cannot separate us from God's love. Ro. 8:28,31-39
3. It might be argued that they experienced more of God's love. 12:6f Acts 5:41
4. Jesus, who suffered most, was most loved by His Father. Jo. 3:35 5:20 10:17 17:24

D. Could God have prevented their suffering?

1. God is sovereign over all things, including suffering, calamity, and persecution. Eph. 1:11 Isa. 45:7 46:10 Ex. 4:11 Lam. 3:37-38 Amos 3:6 I Pe. 3:17 Phil. 1:29

2. He has His good purpose in all evil which He allows. Ge. 50:20 Acts 2:23 Ro. 8:28
3. Jesus' suffering was predestined by the Father. Acts 2:23 Isa. 53:10
4. We may not understand God's purpose in our suffering. Deut. 32:4
5. Faith submits to God's sovereignty. Dan. 4:35 Rom. 11:33-36

E. Why does God allow suffering? (Suffering and the Sovereignty of God, by Piper)

1. Suffering deepens faith and holiness. 12:10 Js. 1:2f
2. Suffering brings greater reward in heaven. Mt. 5:11-12
3. Suffering encourages the faith of other believers. Phil. 1:14
4. Suffering promotes the missionary enterprise.
5. Suffering displays the glorious supremacy of Christ. 10:34 II Co. 12:9-10 Ps. 63:3

F. The world is not worthy of such heroes of faith. v. 38a

1. People of faith are God's gift to the world.
2. They didn't deserve the suffering and the world did not deserve them.
3. Those whom the world rejects and condemns, God commends. v. 39
4. The world rejected Christ of whom it was not worthy. John 1:11

G. What kind of life should we expect in this world? 12:4ff II Ti. 3:12 Mark 8:34 Jo. 15:20 I Pe. 4:12ff Ps. 34:19 Isa. 43:1-3

IV. Concluding summary of what Hebrews 11 teaches us about faith. 11:39-40

A. Faith relies upon the promises of God. 11:1

B. All faith, both in triumph and in trial, gains God's approval. 11:39a,2,6 6:10

C. None of the Old Testament saints received the ultimate promise to which faith looks. 11:39b,6,13-16,26,35b 9:15 10:1ff

D. We are richly blessed to live in the age of fulfillment. v. 40

1. We enjoy the blessings of a *better* covenant which brings *perfection*. 1:4 7:19,22 8:6 9:23 10:34,14,1 11:16 12:2 2:9-11 I Cor. 15
2. The Old Testament saints eagerly anticipated what we are now experiencing. I Pe. 1:10-11 Mt. 13:17
3. We should have greater faith as we endure to the end. 10:36 12:1ff Ro. 8:18

Discussion questions

1. Do people suffer because they lack faith? Explain your answer.
2. Does God have greater love for those who do not suffer? Explain your answer.
3. Why does God allow suffering?
4. In what sense is the world *not worthy* of those who suffered for their faith? v. 38
5. Why isn't the American church prepared to suffer?
6. What do the people who enjoyed triumph and those who suffered share in common?
7. How are we more blessed than the people of faith described in Hebrews 11?
8. Why ought we to have greater faith than they did?