

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
Paul Gunn, Pastor

Sermon Title: The Purpose of Faith is to Give Us Direction, Hebrews 11:30 - 12:3  
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**INTRODUCTION:** I appreciate the many comments of those who've learned new things during the Hebrews study. I don't recall having so many comments on any other study. I am really glad it's making a difference with some of you. Let's launch right into it today. I'll finish the list of those mentioned in Hebrews 11, and then we'll go into Chapter 12 a bit.

I titled this message "The Purpose of Faith is to Give Us Direction." Faith gives us direction. For the Christian, that direction is Christ himself.

We are going to look at the way God uses our faith in giving us direction. There are four points to the message today:

1. The Bible says some had such great faith the world was not worthy of them.
2. None of them received what had been promised.
3. Living for the promise made them more complete.
4. God had something better planned for us.

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 11:30-40 <sup>30</sup> *By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.*

<sup>31</sup> *By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.*

<sup>32</sup> *And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, <sup>33</sup> who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released*

*so that they might gain an even better resurrection.<sup>36</sup> Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.<sup>37</sup> They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—<sup>38</sup> the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.*

*<sup>39</sup> These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised,<sup>40</sup> since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*

**EXPLANATION:** I've preached through some of these stories recently. Jericho was a fortress city that had to be conquered before the Israelites could get into the Promised Land. It seemed impossible, so Joshua sent some spies into the city where they met Rahab, who took them in. They made an agreement with her, and in the end, when everything and everyone was destroyed, Rahab and her family were spared.

Joshua led his army in marches around the city. Did the marches make the walls fall? Did the blast of trumpets make the walls fall? NO. It was by faith. Was Rahab's family really spared because of an agreement? NO. It was by faith.

Gideon – the judge who led his people to victory by using a non-army with non-traditional weapons defeated the Midianites...by FAITH.

Barak – He was a military commander under the judge named Deborah. He had a conquering army of 10,000 men and then later became a judge himself.

Samson – defeated Philistines like crazy...His strength was incredible, and at times, he didn't live for the Lord. But, God used him anyway.

Jephthah – was a judge who defeated the Ammonites and the Ephramites.

David – was a lowly shepherd boy who God called to be the king. He had many vices and was repentant numerous times. The Bible says he was a man after God's own heart.

Samuel - I am beginning a series on Samuel very soon. He was the last of the judges. As a boy, he was given by his mother, Hannah to Eli at the temple.

Now, the scripture continues with all the things these people either witnessed or endured. It would take all day to go over each item and discover who the people are that the scripture talks about.

**First, Go to Verse 38...THE WORLD WAS NOT WORTHY OF THEM.**

**EXPLANATION:** This is really an interesting scripture! Can you imagine being such a person of faith that the Bible recorded your legacy as “the world was not worthy of you?” What a phenomenal complement!

I don't even know how to explain this scripture.

What I see here in this study in Hebrews, as well as the study we are doing on Sunday nights in Judges...and I've made this statement several times as a relevant point... God works with us all in different ways when it comes to faith.

No two people mentioned in Hebrews 11 were alike. No two situations were the same. They were all different. Some of them plowed ahead with courage. Others had to be pushed a bit, but in the end, they were all found faithful. *And the world was not worthy of them.*

Another common denominator we see is—

**Second, NONE OF THEM RECEIVED WHAT HAD BEEN PROMISED.**

Now, again it would make for a very interesting study to look up each person and see what they'd been promised, but never received in their lifetime.

But, again, I don't want to stop here. I want to press ahead with the principle behind it. My question is: Why did God give them a promise if the promise was never fulfilled? Here is the answer—

**Because, LIVING FOR THE PROMISE MADE THEM MORE COMPLETE.**

**EXPLANATION:** Having faith God would keep his promises even though they never lived to see them fulfilled was God's way of building such extraordinary trust in them that they could face death with the confidence God would keep his promises even after they died.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I'll be the first to say this is some unusual reasoning. And, I'll also say most people won't get it. And, let me be real honest with you, I am not sure I get it either.

A really over-simplistic way of saying it is like this. Picture a very old person planting an oak tree with a child and saying to the child, "Someday, you'll enjoy the shade from under this tree."

How about a person who realizes his end is near and he decides to set up a foundation, an endowment, or build something which will live on well past his lifetime, having full confidence that others will see it through?

These are very small examples, but maybe they can get your minds thinking about the meaning behind this passage of scripture.

**APPLICATION:** Now, let me take it more personal...I hope everyone here has someone you are praying for on a regular basis. Some of you have wayward children or other relatives. Perhaps you have a friend who needs the Lord. Some of you believe fully in your heart that the Lord, in his timing, will touch these people. Some of you have been praying for years about something, which you fully believe God will bring about.

All of us, if we are growing Christians, have places in our lives where God is challenging our faith. We must believe him, and we must have faith that he will accomplish what he's promised, even if it comes after we die.

**Fourth, Look at next part of Verse 40: GOD HAD SOMETHING BETTER PLANNED FOR US.**

**EXPLANATION:** In this temporary world, we must realize there is a better home waiting for us, a heaven where we'll see the promises fulfilled in the way God promised. As you've heard me say, we don't know much about heaven. But, we

know it's better than here. We know that there will be no agony, no pain, no fear, and no separation.

God had something better planned for us, and according to verse 40, the people mentioned passed through this life in order to be made complete. Here is what I believe these means: All the people mentioned were in some type of boot camp, being training for greater tasking by God. The faith challenges they had in life gave them direction.

Here are three statements about reigning with God from Revelation 20:

**SCRIPTURE:** Revelation 20:4-6 <sup>4</sup> *I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* <sup>5</sup> *(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.* <sup>6</sup> *Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

**APPLICATION:** Let us be faithful where God has planted us. Let us realize we're on a training ground to something greater.

Now, go back to Chapter 12—

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 12:1-3 <sup>1</sup> *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,* <sup>2</sup> *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* <sup>3</sup> *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

**EXPLANATION:** I realize a few months ago, I got some people upset when I taught about what angels were and were not. This first part of Chapter 12 is another

one of those areas where people get this image in their minds and they want to keep it that way.

“The cloud of witnesses” does not mean spectators. I’ll tell you why.

The cloud of witnesses is not spectators cheering us on, no. The Greek word here is *martyron*, which is used nine times in the New Testament. It means “an eye witness” or “ear witness to something which has already occurred.” And, each of the nine times it’s used in the scripture, it means something that’s already occurred, in the same way a person goes to court to give an eye witness account. So, let’s have an accurate understanding of the image in this scripture. We are not surrounded by spectators in the spirit world. We are surrounded by the testimonies of those who’ve gone before us. In other words, it’s not about them watching us. It’s about us knowing their testimonies! We’ve got to overcome the idea that great-great-great grandma is cheering us on. This is a rather egocentric view. If she’s in heaven, she’s rejoicing in the presence of God, whatever that looks like. A Biblical understanding of heaven is people aren’t really aware of what’s happening on earth, if they know anything at all, except for a few occasions.

Now, a more accurate way to say it is this: Since we are surrounded by the testimonies of the eye and ear witnesses of those who have already gone before us, we should endure until the end, *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.*

**CONCLUSION:** I titled this message is “The Purpose of Faith is to Give Us Direction.” Faith gives us direction. For the Christian, that direction is Christ himself.

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My source for Greek references of “martyron,” translated “witnesses”:

<http://biblehub.com/text/hebrews/12-1.htm>

And, the nine times “martyron” is used, all in the same way as something which has already happened, or would have to happen:

[http://biblehub.com/greek/marturo\\_n\\_3144.htm](http://biblehub.com/greek/marturo_n_3144.htm)

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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