

Introduction:

- To live big, meaning ‘beyond our time’ on this earth we must do as David did in Ps 39 teach me to number my days. And also do as Joseph did in never quitting on God but holding to the dream.
- Heroes of the faith are simple people who had a word from God and hung on to it all the days of their lives. They lived big, beyond their time because they hung on to the Word, held fast to the dream and persevered by faith.
- In the original television series, Superman, our favorite super hero would confidently posture himself, legs spread, fists on his hips, chest pushed forward, while he stared down the barrel of a gun. As the bullets bounced off his chest, Superman would smile, with no thought of retreat. Then something would happen that defies explanation. Once the rounds were spent, the bad guy, in desperation, would hurl the gun at Superman, and the caped super hero would duck!!! Superman, the man who was fearless in the face of oncoming bullets, would cower to avoid being hit by an empty gun! **Application:** Just like Superman, we cower and duck at things that shouldn't intimidate us. As believers, we are perfectly loved and accepted by an all powerful, all knowing, all everything God. And as if this weren't enough, we are promised that "all things will work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28). So, what should cause us to fear? What else matters when compared to the assurance of God's love? In truth, God has given us every reason to face life boldly--with our legs spread, fists on hips, chest out. Nevertheless, we duck at small things. We fret over a setback in our plans, or become discouraged at a disappointing turn of events, or we hesitate to speak boldly of our faith for fear of the reaction it might incite. Our fears send us reeling, even though we live in this world with the certainty of God's eternal promises. Life makes us flinch in a thousand little ways. Like Superman, we duck when we should fearlessly stare them all down. On the night that Jesus was betrayed, Peter cowered in fear of being associated with Him. "I don't know the man," he claimed. Three times he denied his relationship with Christ. Three times he flinched as the empty gun of man's threats was hurled his way. But years later Peter would eventually overcome his fear of empty guns. As a more mature, more courageous follower of Christ he would write, "if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name" (1 Peter 4:16). In other words, Peter is telling us to face life boldly--with our legs spread, fists on hips, chest out, fully assured of God's Word. I want to look at some other heroes of the faith this morning. These heroes had to also stare down big problems as they overcame.
 - “All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised.” (Hebrews 11:39, NLT)
 - “So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.” (Hebrews 12:12–13, NLT)
- In watching the opening of the Band of Brothers DVD series, they are interviewing WWII veterans. They ask one veteran what it was like being a hero. He was so quick to confront the thought and said, “Heroes? We weren't heroes! We were just doing our job!” Hebrews 11 is filled with people who were not heroes but simple people who trusted God and earned a good reputation. Lets observe their lives: Heroes are simple people with BIG PROBLEMS. Heroes are simple people with a Big God. Heroes are simple people who choose to act in a big way. They just do their job in spite of obstacles.

I. Heroes Are Simple People Faced With a Big Problem

- A. Hero - “a hero is a person who is admired for great or brave acts or fine qualities.” Merriam Webster. That is what we find in Hebrews chapter 11. Just simple people like you and I, who in spite of their weakness, overcame obstacles. Because of that, we admire them and read about them

with admiration and a whisper of prayer saying, “Lord help me to be like that.” Their lives testify to us!

1. A hero refers to characters who, in the face of danger and adversity or from a position of weakness, display courage and/or the will for self sacrifice—that is, heroism—for some greater good of all humanity.
 2. Simple people become heroes by the overcoming great obstacles. They muster the courage to act in the midst of weakness that earns them a title. What title are you earning?
- B. Hebrews 11 is filled with simple people faced with big problems.
1. Heb 11:7, Noah was facing a flood, judgment on humanity. He was charged with building something the world had never seen before because of something coming that the world had never seen before.
 2. Hebrews 11:8 Abraham, “*He went without knowing where he was going.*” Ie. ‘typical man’- never stopping to ask for directions. When he got there, vs. 9, he lived as a foreigner (that is uncomfortable: not knowing language, customs, foods, etc.).
 3. Heb 11:11, Sarah was old when she conceived. Big problem! Your body freaks out at young age when pregnant! Think of what this is like in old age.
 4. Heb 11:21-22 Jacob and Joseph both while dying blessed their sons. Death is a place of incredible weakness.
 5. vs 17 Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice. Big Problem: This is my only son!
 6. Vs 32. Gideon (small man from small clan of a small tribe.) Samson (blind and in chains), Daniel (in a lions den), vs 34 Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego (before the furnace) Big problem! A place of weakness.
- C. These heroes of Hebrew 11 got their names in the book, not because they were special, more gifted, or knew the right people. They simply, from a position of weakness chose to act on what they knew and in doing so won a reputation.
1. Reputation - ‘emartyrethesian’, martyr-their actions in the face of adversity won them a testimony, a confession (other people talked/confessed about them). Their actions are still testifying/speaking/confessing today. Therefore they have this reputation! Heroes are simply people with a big problem but they have a bigger God!

II. Heroes Are Simple People With A Bigger God

- A. Heroes are simple people facing a big problem with a Bigger God. What problem are you facing today? Are you in a place of weakness, vulnerability?
- B. When a simple person says, “My God is bigger than my problem!” They are stepping into the realm of faith. Meaning that they are trusting/faith in God to equip them to overcome, to help them to overcome, to resource them to overcome.
- C. Where does this faith come from? Where does this ability to trust God come from?
1. Heroes of the faith know the character of God. Ie. The man with the withered hand knew God was able he just need to know that God was willing!
 - a) To know the character of God you have to know God and you have to spend time with God. In spending time with Him, you find out that He has your best interest in mind. He holds your heart in His hand.
 - b) “Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation.” [D. Elton Trueblood, 20th century author, educator, Quaker theologian] The key to becoming a hero of the faith is to live without reservation. I have joked through the years of people who say they want to change but they make ‘reservations’ in case things do not work out. They say they want to quit a certain sin but in their mind they make reservations in case they need to go back.

- c) “Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.” [Oswald Chambers]
2. Heroes of the Faith take God at His Word.
 3. Heroes of the Faith did not stop when life got hard. Their faith held them to task/word of God at hand. They kept taking one more step.
- D. By faith, God’s power is release in our weakness. Have a big problem? Get a bigger God!
1. God’s power operates in the weak and corruptible sphere of human existence. It is visible only to faith, and for this very reason, it is known as divine, not human power.
 2. Concealment in apparent weakness is the law of the cross! *“Although he was crucified in weakness, he now lives by the power of God.”* (2 Corinthians 13:4, NLT)
 3. *“This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God’s weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.”* (1 Corinthians 1:25, NLT)
 4. Listen to these words of Paul *“Each time He said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* (2 Corinthians 12:9–10, NLT)
 5. *“We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.”* (2 Corinthians 4:7, NLT)
 6. Weakness is the starting point of the working of divine power. Because of who Christ is Paul finds freedom from self and reliance on God. By the law of strength in weakness, the resurrection power of God is more abundantly exerted; whether in ministers of the gospel or in the Christian community as a whole. Big Problem (weakness) Bigger God (more strength)
 7. Heroes of the Faith trusted God when life seemed impossible.

III. Heroes Are Simple People Who Hold On In A Big Way

- A. Heroism is faith transformed into action. You do not win the title of hero by not acting. You win by choosing to act. How would your life change if you chose to act in faith today?
1. The ordinary man is involved in action. The hero acts. An immense difference.
 2. “Faith and works should travel side-by-side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again--until you can scarcely distinguish which is one and which is the other.” – William Booth in The Founders’ Messages to Soldiers. Christianity Today, Vol. 36, no. 10. There are at least three commitments heroes make in ‘doing their job’ as Christians.
- B. Heroes make a commitment to the Word of God
1. Every individual listed in Hebrews 11 took God at His word. Look at what it says about Ro 4:18-20 *“Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!” And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb. Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God.”* (Romans 4:18–20, NLT) Unwavering faith brings God glory.
- C. Heroes make a commitment to the Will of God
1. “It does not take great men to do great things; it only takes consecrated men.” – Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)

2. Who is a hero? He who conquers his will. - The Mishna “Meaning to study and review” it is a ‘commentary’ of the Jewish Torah.
 3. I believe it was John Wesley who said, “Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I will shake the world. I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; and such alone will overthrow the kingdom of Satan and build up the kingdom of God on earth.”
 4. The Holy Spirit chooses nobodies and makes them somebody when they are committed to God’s will in their lives. The men and women of Hebrews 11 were committed to the things of God.
- D. Heroes make a commitment to the work of God
1. “I am only an average man, but I work harder at it than the average man.” – Teddy Roosevelt
 2. “Faith and works should travel side-by-side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again--until you can scarcely distinguish which is one and which is the other.” – William Booth in The Founders’ Messages to Soldiers. Christianity Today, Vol. 36, no. 10.
 3. There is a Norwegian Proverb that says’ A hero is one who knows how to hang on one minute longer.” In Christ’s service the heroes are those who work until Christ says it’s time to stop.

Conclusion:

- Hebrew 11:2, 39 and 12:1 all speak of witnesses. Reputation and witness is the same Gr. word Martyr.
 - “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.” (Hebrews 12:1–2, NLT)
- What reputation do you have?
- You can start by making Jesus Lord of your life.