Dear Open Door Family,

How do you feel when someone tells you about something hard that they are struggling with? Do you try to fix it? Do you give advice about what they should do? Do you get uncomfortable and change the subject? Do you tell them you will pray for them and then forget about it? We have all done those kinds of things. What do we do when what is happening to someone does NOT go away -maybe it even gets worse? Do we blame them for NOT having enough FAITH? Do we quote verses at them and promise that God will help them if they will obey? Hard things, like serious pain, long term health issues, or even on-going emotional struggles make many of us uncomfortable. We may wonder if the person is being punished by God, or if there is some secret sin they have not confessed that keeps God from answering their prayers. In the last section of Hebrews 11, the FAITH chapter, we meet two groups of people. Both groups are PRAISED for their FAITH. Please take time to read these verses.

Hebrews 11:32-39 *(NIV) [32] And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, [33]* ***who through FAITH...*** *conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, [34] 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. [35] Women received back their dead, raised to life again.* ***...OTHERS*** *were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. [36] Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. [37] They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated-- [38]* ***the world was NOT WORTHY of them****. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.* ***[39] These were ALL commended for their FAITH,*** *yet none of them received what had been promised.*

THROUGH FAITH....

SOME... conquered kingdoms, administered justice, received the promises, shut lion's mouths, quenched flames, escaped the sword, were made strong, conquered enemy armies, raised the dead,

OTHERS... were tortured and refused to be released, faced jeers, were flogged, were chained and put in prison, were stoned, were sawed in two, were killed with the sword, had to wear sheepskins and goat skins, were destitute, persecuted, and mistreated, wandered in deserts and mountains, lived in caves and holes in the ground.

What a difference; BOTH groups had FAITH. Some through FAITH trusted God for victories, miracles, and blessings; OTHERS by FAITH trusted God to help them endure facing torture, death, or living desolate and lonely lives in a way that Honored God. The amazing thing is that verse 39 says ALL of them... both groups were commended for their FAITH. I have to be honest I would rather be somewhere in the first group and nowhere in the second. Yet the writer of Hebrews reminds us that it was FAITH at work in both kinds of situations. That challenges me NOT to complain when things are going badly for me - and never to judge why someone else is going through difficulties and trials.

PRAYER: Lord God, help me to TRUST You no matter what is going on in my life. Help me to depend on you for the strength to be victorious or for the grace to suffer while honoring You. I cannot do it without You.

Pastor Mark Kieft
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