

In Memory Of

May 26 is Memorial Day. This day honors the memory of those who lost their lives in battle. These men and women did offer the ultimate sacrifice to a cause. It probably inspires people to want to be brave and loyal like them. Some may even become soldiers; others will probably display Grandpa's medals and apply his code of ethics to their lives; still others may simply brag about Grandpa and live lives that he would never endorse.

Sometimes we are reluctant to honor the memories of deceased persons. We want to give Christ the preeminence, and we should; however, the Bible lists men, and their examples of faithful obedience, that we should seek to follow. When men leave a legacy of obedience to God, we have a memory that we may honor and a life worth copying.

In Hebrew 11, we find a list of the Heroes of Faith, which we call the Hall of Faith. We read about these courageous men and women, and consider that we could fall short of faithfulness. We doubt that we would have the faith needed to build an ark, move to a place we'd never seen, offer our son, or leave the luxuries of a palace. We look at these actions, wonder how they could do it, and doubt that we could.

Is it because we don't need faith today? Or is it that we don't always see the way faith plays out in our lives? I believe it is the latter. I believe each of these examples of faith has a spiritual aspect that we face. For example, Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice. Didn't Cain know? It seems he had to know what God required. We know what happened: Cain went ahead and offered unacceptable sacrifices, and with a bitter heart, killed Abel. The lesson for us is that we must approach God in an acceptable way. Not every form of worship will meet His approval. Worshiping Biblically, when many do not, requires faith. It always has.

Noah built an ark. He had never seen rain, let alone a flood. But he believed God and built an ark "to the saving of his house." There is a flood of evil in this world. are we building an ark to save our house, or are we eating, drinking, marrying, etc? Fathers, we must take an example from the memory of Noah and do radical things to help save our children from the flood. It doesn't matter what fashionable philosophy says; by faith we follow God's pattern for the "ark."

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived as strangers, dwelling in tents. The Bible mentions Abraham looking for a city that had foundations. We are so

comfortable having foundations that I wonder how well we are doing on this one. We are to be looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. We are fond of the security of earthly “empires” and “cities” that we build, but God requires us to live as strangers without earthly foundations. How attached are we to this earth? By faith we need to let these things go, move “into a far country,” and trust that God’s city has the foundations and security He promises.

Abraham offered up Isaac. Notice Abraham was offering him to God. He gave his son to his Creator. He knew God had first rights to Isaac. We need to offer our children to God. By faith we allow God to plan where they will live and what occupation they will have. Let’s be careful not to convey the sense that our ideas for their lives are exactly what God intends for them. We may need to “offer up our sons and daughters” to God, for Him to work His purposes through and in them.

Moses’ parents disobeyed the king’s command to kill their son. I trust that we will never face a decree to limit our families’ sizes. However, having children today is an act of faith. Will our children grow up to be spiritually safe? Will there be a faithful church for them? How can a faithful church exist in such an evil society? Is God making a mistake by asking us to be fruitful? By faith we have children, not fearing the evil in the world, because we know that obedience has its rewards. We know that if we obey God, He will show Himself strong.

Moses chose the lot of God’s people when he had Egypt at his fingertips. He knew the rewards of righteousness far outweighed the pleasures of sin. He shared the vision that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had about the city with foundations. By faith we need to detach from worldly systems, hedonism, and pride to cast our lot with the people of God. It is impossible to have it both ways. We must choose by faith to follow God’s people, even when it looks uncomfortable.

As Hebrews says, “What shall I more say?” We have blessings beyond measure; we not only have the list of Heroes of Faith, but also decades of faithful men and women in our heritage. But admiring a soldier doesn’t make one a soldier, and admiring faithful obedience doesn’t make one faithfully obedient. Will the admiration make us proud to have a heritage while we live in spiritual ruin? Or will it move us to live as they did in surrender to God in our circumstances?

~Lyndon Burkholder