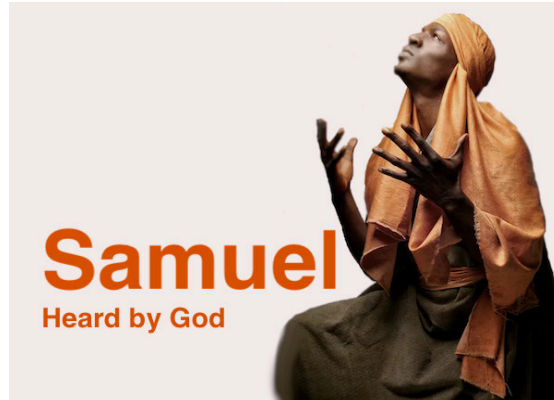


Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Worship Service
10:30AM 25th August 2024
Led by Selina Chan with the Rev Dr Julia Binney Preaching
www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk
Find us on Facebook @Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



Summer Series: Not Only for Heroes...Twelve studies on the lesser known heroes of faith

Theme 11: The Prayer of Faith – Samuel (1 Samuel 7:1-14)

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Our Lord, we are Yours, we are Your people, and the sheep of Your pasture.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at Your command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Your steadfast love endures forever, and Your faithfulness to all generations.

Through faith we draw near to You, trusting in Your promises even when we are in the darkest time.

We come with our hearts full of faith – faith in Your goodness, faith in Your power, and faith in Your unfailing love.

Now, we stand together, declare our trust in You, as You are faithful in all Your ways. Amen.

HYMN MP 269

I do not know what lies ahead,
the way I cannot see;
yet one stands near to be my guide;
He'll show the way to me.

*I know who holds the future,
And He'll guide me with His hand.
With God things don't just happen;
Everything by Him is planned.
So as I face tomorrow
With its problems large and small,
I'll trust the God of miracles,
give to Him my all.*

I do not know how many days
of life are mine to spend;
but one who knows and cares for me

will keep me to the end.

I do not know the course ahead,
What joys and griefs are there;
But one is near who fully knows;
I'll trust His loving care.

Alfred B. Smith and Eugene Clarke copyright of 1958 New Spring Publishing/Image Music/Small Stone Media BV/Song Solutions Daybreak

A PRAYER OF PRAISE:

We thank you Lord, for Your unwavering faithfulness throughout the ages.

You have kept every promise You made, from the days of Abraham to this very moment.

In times of uncertainty, we find our strength in You, knowing that You are our firm foundation.

You are the God who turns darkness into light, who brings hope in the midst of despair, and who works all things together for the good of those who love You.

May our lives be a reflection of the faith we have in You – faith that moves mountains, faith that brings peace, faith that leads us into a deeper relationship with You. Amen.

A PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

Forgive us Lord, for the times when we have allowed fear, anxiety and unbelief to overshadow our faith in You. We beg You to renew our faith, strengthen our resolution, and help us to count on You fully.

Cleanse our hearts, and restore us to an intimate relationship with You, that we may walk by faith, and not by sight.

We thank You for Your mercy, Lord, and for the forgiveness that is ours through Jesus Christ.

Help us to live every day with a faith that honours You, let us be a testament of Your love and Your grace in the world. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: YOU ARE INVITED TO PRAY IN YOUR OWN LANGUAGE

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name,

Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,

As we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours.

Now and forever and ever. Amen.

FAMILY TIME: The Prayer of Faith

An offering will be taken during the following song...If you would prefer to contribute electronically, please either use the card machine at the entrance of the sanctuary or scan the QR code at the end of this sheet.

PRAISE SONG (YouTube: ccw vbs)

I'm not afraid, afraid to let go

I know You're holding me

You're the One I'm leaning on

You are my hope and my strength

For every breath I breathe

And the ground beneath my feet

I will trust You, I will trust You

In every circumstance, no matter where I am

I will trust You, I will trust in You

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus (x3)

'Tis so sweet, 'tis so sweet

Lifeway kids SME (on behalf of lifeway Worship); ASCAP, LatinAutor – SonyATV, SOLAR Music Rights Management. LaitnAutorPerf, BMI

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

BIBLE READING 1: 1 Samuel 7:1-14

BIBLE READING 2: Mark 11:20-25

HYMN BP&W 536

Master, speak! Your servant's listening,
Waiting for Your gracious word,
For Your gladdening voice I'm longing;
Master, let it now be heard.

As I listen, Lord, I pray:

"Speak Your word to me today!"

Speak to me by name, dear Master!

Let me know it is to me;

Speak, that I may follow faster,

With a step more firm and free,

Where the Shepherd leads the flock

In the shadow of the rock.

Master, speak! Though least and lowest,

Let me not unheard depart;

Master, speak! You know the deepest

Fears and longings of my heart,

Fully know my truest need;

Speak and make me blessed indeed.

Master speak! And make me ready,

With Your voice is truly heard,

With obedience glad and steady

Still to follow every word.

As I listen, Lord, I pray;

Master, speak to me today!

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-79)



SERMON: Not only for Heroes 11: The Prayer of Faith (Hebrews 11:32, 1 Samuel 7:1-14)

Today is the last in our series on Hebrews 11 and the great Old Testament heroes of faith. We have concentrated on the lesser known characters to emphasise that faith is not only for heroes. We are *all* called to a life of faith. We have seen that some of the

'heroes' we have studied have been deeply flawed. They were largely a bunch misfits, wimps and losers. But this is the point. God made misfits into mighty champions, wimps into warriors and losers into leaders. This is how scripture deals with people. Think of Abraham, a liar, David, an adulterer, Paul a murderer. Think of the Apostle Peter in the Gospels – eager but dense and stubborn, who betrays Jesus in his hour of need. In other words, the people in the Bible are ordinary flawed human beings. The Bible is not a book of rules and regulations. It is the story about God's dealings with us; what has gone wrong with the world, and what God has done/is doing to put it right. God used ordinary people in the past and

still uses ordinary people like us in the present. But like the heroes in the past we too may be called to do extraordinary things.

Each of the heroes mentioned in Hebrews 11 illustrates some aspect of faith. This week we are looking at the story of Samuel and The Prayer of Faith. Samuel is the last to be named in the 'honourable mentions' section of the list of the faithful in Hebrews 11:32-34: '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, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 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.'

Again we turn to the Old Testament to discover what aspect of the principle of faith was at work in Samuel's life and ministry and why the writer of Hebrews included him in their list of heroes. We find the answers in 1 Samuel 7:1-14. The Old Testament book of Judges ends with 'In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit' (21:25). Samuel was the last of the judges. He was the son of Elkanah, who had two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. The former had lots of children but Hannah, the favoured wife, had none. Peninnah goaded her about it. Poor Hannah went to the temple to pray and agonised in prayer before God. Eventually she conceived and gave birth to a Son. She called him Samuel, 'Because I asked the Lord for him' (1 Samuel 1:20). Hannah took her Son to the Temple, to Eli, a priest and dedicated him to the Lord. From the beginning Samuel's life was founded on the prayer of faith. Hannah said to Eli, 'I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he shall be given over to the Lord' (1 Samuel 1:27,28). And 'The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up and he was recognised as a prophet of the Lord by the whole of Israel (1 Samuel 3:19,20). Samuel was no misfit, wimp or loser. He was a godly man who faithfully served the Lord from childhood.

Samuel was the person God chose to establish kingship in Israel and to transition the covenant community from the rule of the judges to that of the monarchy. Even though Israel's insistence of having a king like the other nations around them was a sinful request as God was their King (see 1 Samuel 8). So he wasn't perfect but the writer of Hebrews 11 includes him in the list of heroes because of his prayer of faith on Israel's behalf.

The big enemy at that time was the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:1-14). The Israelites were in a sorry state spiritually and religiously but they longed that things would change: 'all the people mourned and sought the Lord' (v.2). So Samuel called the people of Israel to assemble at Mizpah and rededicate themselves to the Lord (vs.2-5). Samuel pledged to pray to the Lord for them (v.5). And Samuel pleaded to the Lord on their behalf and the Lord answered him (v.9).

It is the calling and privilege of every Christian to pray, and to pray not only for themselves but for others. This is what is meant by a ministry of intercession. However, it is one thing to pray but quite another to pray in faith. To be successful in prayer the pray-er must be a person of faith. As Jesus said, 'Have faith in God... I tell you the truth, if you say to this mountain, 'Go throw yourself into the sea, and do not doubt in your heart but believe that what you say will happen, it will be done for you. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe you have received it, and it will be yours' (Mark 11:22-24). References to the withered fig tree wrap around the incident of Jesus cleansing the temple courts. The cursing of the fig-tree is prophetic symbolism for judgment but Jesus applies it to illustrate believing prayer. The Temple his disciples really needed to be concerned about was not the physical temple in Jerusalem but Jesus. The point Jesus is making is that faith can do amazing things and the faith he is talking about is specifically faith in himself. We generally wonder when we are praying whether God hears us. Jesus reverses that: it is certain that God hears us but are we really praying?

J O Fraser from London (1886-1938) was the first missionary of the China Inland Mission to the Lisu people of eastern Tibet. He wrote a little book entitled, *The Prayer of Faith*. He came to realise more and

more the importance of prayer in any work of God. As he wrote: 'Solid, lasting mission work is done on our knees' and he also wrote 'Praying without faith is like trying to cut with a blunt knife – much labour expended to little purpose.'

There are several important lessons for us to learn from Samuel in 1 Samuel 7:1-14 about the Prayer of Faith:

1. It must be accompanied by confession and genuine repentance (vs. 3-6). They put away all their idolatrous gods and turned from their old ways. V.6 'they drew water and poured it out before the Lord.' This symbolises a pouring out of their hearts in repentance and humility before God. They confessed, 'We have sinned against the Lord.' Our prayers will not be effective if we are deliberately living in disobedience and unacknowledged sin. As the Apostle James put it, it is the prayers of a righteous person that are powerful and effective (James 5:16). The Prayer of Faith is about living rightly before God.
2. The Prayer of Faith may be challenged by fear and doubt but the pray-er keeps going even in the face of discouragement and apparent disappointment (vs.7,8). There is much in Scripture about persisting in prayer. For example, Jesus tells the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8 to 'show them that they should always pray and not give up (v.1). The problem for the Israelites was that they heard that the Philistines were coming for them and they started panicking v.7. They looked at their circumstances rather than looking to God. In the face of a possible Philistine attack, the Israelites pleaded with Samuel to keep on praying because they believed that God would rescue them (v.8). They then turned from their circumstances to the Lord. When doubts came they carried on praying and trusting.
3. The Prayer of Faith is specific – not vague, generalised prayer. Samuel addressed his prayer to God and asked for what was needed: 'he cried out to the Lord on Israel's behalf and the Lord answered him' (v.9). We too need to be specific in our prayers. God invites us to tell him what we need and he promises to meet our need: 'And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 4:19). What is your need right now? Look to him and ask him to meet your need: As the Lord says, 'Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me' (Psalm 50:15).
4. The Prayer of Faith is based on the finished work of Christ on the cross. Samuel offered a lamb as a burnt sacrifice to the Lord (v.9). There is only one way we can approach God and that is by the blood of Christ. The Old Testament sacrificial system foreshadowed the one true sacrifice of the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), a sacrifice once for all (Hebrews 10:10).
5. The Prayer of Faith will be challenged. When the people were gathering and Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the enemy drew near to attack them (v.10). Paul in his passage on the armour of God reminds us of the spiritual conflict we are in against the principalities and powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:10-18). The armour protects us but a key weapon is prayer: 'Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests' (v.18). As E M Bounds wrote in *The Weapon of Prayer*, 'Real heart-praying, live-praying, praying by the power of the Holy Spirit, direct, specific, ardent, simple praying... puts God to work in all things prayed for.'
6. The Prayer of Faith is a prayer that is always answered (vs.10,13,14). God gave his people a mighty victory, they were delivered from the grip of the Philistines and peace came. The enemy was subdued and overcome by prayer. When we pray in faith in Jesus' name, God has promised to answer us: 'You may ask anything in my name, and I will do it' (John 14:14). And God has also promised to do 'immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine' (Ephesians 3:20).

The Prayer of Faith transforms us and transforms the world. Samuel's prayer changed everything for the Israelites. Prayer changes everything for us. It transforms us and transforms the world. Again as E M Bounds put it, 'Prayer is an absolute necessity to the proper carrying on of God's work... because God has made it so.' In your life and in our life together as a church we face many issues, questions,

uncertainty and challenges. If we are to face them with any degree of success, we must give ourselves to prayer. There is no alternative to the Prayer of Faith. Referring to prayer, Leonard Ravenhill wrote, 'If we fail here – we fail everywhere.'

PRAISE SONG (Youtube: ForGodsoLoved777)

God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me
He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side
With love and strength
For each new day
He will make a way, he will make a way

By a roadway in the wilderness, You lead me
River in the desert will I see
Heaven and earth will fade
But His Word will still remain
And He will do something new today

God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me
He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side
With love and strength
For each new day
He will make a way, he will make a way

With love and strength
For each new day
He will make a way, he will make a way

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PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: Polly and Thomas

Abba Father, you love us though we are sinners. You build your church and ask us to share your love with others. You open the door of our church and let us have many new faces here. Please guide us so that we know how to develop the Toddlers group on every Thursday. Most of the children and their parents are waiting for the gospel. The Alpha course is coming to an end. Also, we have many opportunities to share your love in the function groups and the connect groups in our church. Please open the seekers' hearts so that they would be well prepared to follow you and become Christians. You are our refuge. There are a lot of friends among us and in Reading that need your help. We pray for the council and the government. Hope they have wisdom and mercy to treat the needy and the asylum seekers kindly. Many of them must move from place to place and feel frustrated. Please grant them peace.

Lord, we need you.

We pray for the missionary families we have met in the church. Vokuhl's family has been back in

Nepal. We pray that Toby's project of designing the school, and the safe houses can have a smooth progress. We pray for the Bowers also. They are serving the youths, especially the girls, in Thailand. Please protect all of them and let more and more people hear your wonderful name.

Lord, we need you.

O Holy Spirit, you intercede for us through wordless groans. Nowadays we have a lot of tears when we read the news and look around this wicked world. Innocent people died because of crimes. We pray for the mental health of all the people living in this country. Please heal the broken-hearted people. Save us from fear and threats. Pray that the government and the relevant parties can understand the situation and come up to a good solution.

Lord, we need you.

Christ Jesus, you are the King of kings and the Lord of lords. There are some leaders in this world who want to extend the borders of their country and gain more power. They just want to have wars. Please help the hopeless people and comfort those who have lost their beloved ones. We cry for your justice and righteousness. Lord, we know there'll be a lot of difficulties and tears before you come. Let's prepare ourselves to meet you again.

Lord, we need you.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

HYMN BP&W 391

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
Tender to me the promise of His word;
In God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His name!
Make known His might, the deeds His arm has done;
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;
His holy name – The Lord, the mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of His word!
Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure:
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
To children's children and forever more!

Timothy Dudley-Smith Copyright 1961 Timothy Dudley-Smith

BENEDICTION

As you go 'I want to remind you that your strength must come from the Lord's mighty power within you. Put on all of God's armour so that you will be able to stand safe against all the strategies and tricks of Satan... and keep praying' (Ephesians 6:10,11,18 TLB).

THE GRACE

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, Amen.



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