

## **A Story of Faith**

### **Hebrews 11 – 12:1 – 3**

Have you ever been tempted to write a story about your life?

An autobiography? What would you write? What stories have you got to tell?

My Son Elisha is 1 on Tuesday If he were able to write anything then his story would be full of milk and cuddles. It would be a very short story of course!

If you are older, perhaps you have many amazing and even amusing stories from across decades.

I used to love hearing stories from my Grandad when he was alive about his time during World War 2 as a sailor, his stories about football mainly Charlton Athletic and his brilliant stories about his brother Len who was a really lovely and funny guy.

I've been doing a lot of research on Ancestry.com finding out and putting together a picture of my family history and you get to find out some really amazing stuff.

In the news recently we have been seeing statues being torn down by people. Edward Colston was the statue in Bristol. I must confess I didn't know much about his life until now. But his story is starting to be told by those who are protesting and by historians. One side of the story of Edward Colston is one of a generous man who did a lot for the people of Bristol but on the other side he was a man that profited from the slave trade and is responsible for the suffering of many black people.

Our stories are important.

What will we be known for ?

Maybe your story is difficult to tell. Maybe you experienced a lot of hurt. Maybe there are parts you like to share but other parts you keep well hidden.

God sees it though, he knows your story very well just read Psalm 139 to find out how well he knows you,

But my story & your story continues until we stand before God.

### **2 Corinthians 5:10**

**For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.**

One day we will stand before God and he will want to go through our story with us. I don't believe he will ask me much about my C.D or DVD collection, or how many football shirts I

have. But he will ask whether I've loved and helped people, whether I've forgiven, whether I've fed the hungry or shown compassion to others.

Here at Park Road Baptist Church, in the year 2020 we are part of a story. If you are watching this and you live in Peterborough you are probably part of my story and I'm a part of your story. But together we are part of a bigger story, one that started way back not just in 1653 when Baptists first met together in Peterborough but started 2000 years ago in Israel.

**The Question is, what is our story now here in 2020? What will they say about us in 10 - 20 years time? Will we still be here? Will we have grown so much and have made such a difference that people from all over the city will know who we are and where we are? Will they say Park Road Baptist Church has brought light to our city?**

Our story continues.....

I believe as followers of THE WAY, followers of Jesus we are blessed to have God's Word in our hands and The Word living in our lives through the Holy Spirit. The Bible is God's story and about his people. It would be easy to look at some of these well known characters from the Bible and think they are amazing and in a different category to us but read their stories and you will see ordinary people like us who sin and make mistakes. Who have fears and anxieties. Who love and have challenges. The only difference is that they wore sandals and clothes that look different to ours and spoke a different language.

**Who is your favourite Person from the Bible, and why ?**

- **THE LIST**

In Hebrews chapter 11 we see a whole list of Old Testament people who lived thousands of years ago and yet they are remembered. The writer of this letter to the Hebrews was wanting to reach out to Jewish Christians who were being tempted to go back to their old ways, a tug of war between Judaism and Following Christ. The Law verses Faith and life through the Spirit.

The Writer commends these ordinary people for their faith

We have Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham & Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel & the Prophets

The writer could have continued for ages listing names. The readers would have revered these people like many people revere film stars and A list celebrities today.

**What's interesting are some of the experiences that God's people faced. How many can you relate to?**

Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, shutting the mouths of Lions, quenched the fury of flames and escaped the edge of the sword. Whose weakness was turned into strength. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so they may gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while others were chained and put in prison, they were stoned, sawn in two, killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins. Destitute, persecuted and ill treated. They wandered deserts and mountains and in caves and holes in the ground.

Note that not all these experiences are pleasant.

They were all sure of what they were hoping for and certain of what they couldn't see. This is FAITH ! Hebrews 11:6 and without Faith it is impossible to please God

**Can you think of a time when you had Faith that God was going to do something? What are you hoping for now? What are you certain of even though you can't see it or it hasn't happened yet. Do we need to step out in faith?**

- **The Connection**

These people of faith from the Old Testament ultimately didn't receive what was promised. The Jews were waiting for the Messiah and he hadn't come during their lifetime. But Jesus (Yeshua) has come and these new converts, new believers have found new life and redemption through the Messiah. The Writer to the Hebrews gets his readers really excited by saying 'look at these heroes of old and their faith well you too have a part in this story too'.

Hebrews 11:39 – 40: God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect

They were Pre Christ, we are after Christ what brings everyone together is Christ. The fulfilment of God's promises to them has now come in Christ Jesus and their redemption too is now complete in him.

### What can we take from Hebrews 11

In the Roman world they loved their sport. You can go to Turkey, Italy, Tunisia and all around the Roman Empire and you will find these amazing stadiums called amphitheatres. The Colosseum in Rome is spectacular! The ancient Greeks also loved their sport too and so the Writer of Hebrews uses this imagery of a sporting event with all these Witnesses, Martyrs and testifiers in the stadium watching and supporting you. Being surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. All of us past and present united in Christ with all those great people mentioned in Hebrews 11. Do you feel even a tiny bit encouraged? Did your Mum, Dad or someone you love come to watch you on Sports Day or at a Performance on stage. At Christmas I went to see my son Ezekiel at his Christmas play, I sat there in the crowd and he saw me and smiled and almost the whole time he kept his eyes on me. The same with my other son Elijah. They knew they were being loved and supported and it spurred them on. Ask any footballer what

they love about playing and they will say the fans, the crowds the noise, it really inspires them.

So let's go for it let's be sold out for Christ.

**Let's get rid of all the stuff that is getting in the way.** The sin that entangles us. Can we really sing "Knowing you Jesus, knowing you there is no greater thing" and mean it? If there is something hindering you or a sin that we are entangled with, why not ask someone you trust to pray with you. What steps do you need to take to get yourself back on track?

**Let us run with perseverance** the race marked out for us. It's not a sprint, it's a marathon and you can't run 26 miles just like that you must train, be committed and focused. Jesus doesn't ask us to come first he just asks us to run our race and complete it. I was chatting to someone on facebook about this. He posted a video that explained what privilege is. It's a popular term at the moment White Privilege etc... In the video these Young People line up to race with £100 as the prize to the winner. Before the race began the organizer called out some statements and if these statements were true the young person had to take two steps forward. It worked out that the race was unfair as some people had a big advantage. What was interesting for me personally was I didn't qualify for any of his statements apart from 1. It turned out that I had really no advantage. I told my friend this but said we all have different races in life to run God has a race marked out for me and he didn't ask me to come first in my race, he just asks me to run it and complete it.

**Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus,** the author and perfecter of our faith. Our Lord ran his race which led him to the cross and he completed it. He said 'It is Finished'. Now he sits on his throne at God's right hand

Think of how he endured the cross, the hate and opposition, It really was unfair how he was treated. The creator of the world being hung on a horrible cross. It wasn't right, it wasn't just but he obeyed his father "Not my will but yours he said ". Complete surrender to his Father's will

Philippians 2: 6 – 11: says about Jesus; Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There is a lot that can distract us in our race like when Peter got distracted by the waves when he walked on water. What distractions are you facing if any ? Let's fix our eyes upon Jesus let's step out in faith in our world that we live in today. Let's continue the story of faith.