

Flawed Heroes

One of the “proofs” of the Bible’s inspiration are the unpolished accounts of its heroes. If the Word of God were the mere fictitious work on uninspired men, the flaws and faults of these heroes and heroines would have surely been glossed over with idealized and idolized versions of their character and exploits. But such is not the case...

Despite being included in the so-called *Hall of Faith* in Hebrews 11, note also that:

- **Abraham’s** early lack of faith is manifested through his failure to trust in God’s protection by twice lying about Sarah being his sister instead of his wife, Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-7;
- **Sarah’s** lack of faith in God’s ability to deliver a promised son in her old age is revealed by her disbelieving laugh when the prediction was made, Genesis 18:9-15;
- **Moses’** lack of faith is shown through his rebellious sin of *striking the rock* to provide water for Israel when he was commanded to *speak to it*, Numbers 20:8-12,24;
- **David’s** lack of faith is laid bare through the unvarnished account of his adultery with Bathsheba, and the murder of her husband, Uriah, 2Samuel 11 – 12; and,
- The list could go on to include virtually all the other “heroes of faith” from Hebrews 11 who, at certain times and on specific occasions, demonstrated decidedly *flawed* and *faulted* faith.

So, does this cataloging of failure just support the divine inspiration of the Scriptures because of their presence, or is there more to it? The “rest of the story” for our purposes in this article surely must also include the fact that we like *flawed* heroes. They make us feel better about our own weaknesses and failures to be faithfully heroic. We even want our fictitious heroes to have weaknesses- every “Superman” seemingly must have his own personal “kryptonite.” Consider our entertainment. Apparently, modern fictitious versions of our heroes/heroines- be they doctors, lawyers, firemen, policemen, detectives, whatever, must come with a built-in character flaw, or some other burden of tragic grief, borderline psychosis, or secret and near-disabling addiction. Why would writers and producers include these limiting factors within our conjured protagonists? Because that’s the way we like them, is surely the answer. Please don’t misunderstand. I’m not at all suggesting that the biblical accounts of our “heroes” include their fractures of faith to placate our palates, or to make them more “real” to us. Instead, these flaws are included in the sacred text because they were present in the people- at least on occasions. But the true value of these *imperfections* is their ability to manifest *perfection* by comparison....

Instead of idolizing some perceived “hero” because he/she has *imperfections* like ours, why not seek one whose *perfection* both challenges and inspires greatness in us? Rather than identifying with the *flawed* and *fallen*, why not look to the *faultless*? Jesus Christ is “the Man” in every sense of that word! Consider carefully Hebrews 12:1-3 in this connection: “*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.*” Please note a few pertinent points:

- We can and are expected to *lay aside every encumbrance and sin*. We must stop making excuses for our failures and strive for perfection.

- We do so, not by identifying with “heroes” of *flawed faith*, but by *fixing our eyes* (from the Greek *apeido-* to look away from one thing and at another) on the *faultless* one, Jesus Christ. Examine every facet of His life, realizing that He “*has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin,*” Hebrews 4:15. Such perfection not only enabled His sacrifice for our sins, it provides an example for us to follow.
- He is the **author** (from the Greek *archegos-* not just a *source*, but also a *hero* who by *example leads* or *pioneers* so that others can follow) and **perfecter** (from the Greek *telotes-* one who makes possible the successful completion of something) of the faith necessary to *please God* (cf. Hebrews 11:6), and *run with endurance the race set before us*.

I think I understand our affinity for and tendencies toward *flawed* “heroes/heroines,” but truly believe that we need to refocus our attention on the *faultless* Hero of our faith, **Jesus Christ**. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)