

# Statues...

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, July 6, 2020

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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us and Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July Weekend. We are blessed to live in this great nation! Whether you are here IN-PERSON or watching via the LIVESTREAM, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. We have much to cover in a relatively short amount of time.

## TO THE WORD

**NOTE** – I want to OPEN this message with a reading of the ENTIRETY of Hebrews 11...

### Hebrews 11 (NIV)

1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

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

4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: “He could not be found, because God had taken him away.” For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

32 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, 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. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed 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, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

Our nation is embroiled in a DEBATE concerning the place of STATUES of historical figures in our society—i.e., figures who have been memorialized and enshrined for ongoing consideration and remembrance. We do well to understand BOTH SIDES of this discussion.

**NOTE 1** – Many argue that certain statues should be REMOVED, as it is inappropriate and/or wrong to venerate men and women who had villainous aspects their lives and character. The more LEVEL-HEADED of this contingent recommends placing them in museums, etc., that they might be properly studied and considered in context. The more LAWLESS contingent topples them in the public square, bypassing (i.e., hobbling) the very democracy they seek to purify.

**NOTE 2** – Others argue that said statues should REMAIN in the public square, lest we FORGET history. This contingent sees a DANGER in the potential Orwellian erasure/rewriting of history. They are also concerned with where this removal of statues may end. i.e., Today we remove statues of Confederate leaders—who will it be TOMORROW? Before you dismiss this as being a mere slippery slope argument, keep in mind that figures like Lincoln, Grant, Washington and Jefferson are also being targeted. They posit: “If we remove the statues of imperfect people, we will have NO statues left at all.”

In many regards both perspectives have VALIDITY and should NOT be casually dismissed. However, it is NOT my intent to enter into this debate this morning. Rather, I merely want to use it as a LAUNCHING point for a broader-based biblical discussion. Consider the following...

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

The Bible MEMORIALIZES for us an ARRAY of historical figures. Many, for instance, appear in Hebrews 11.

**NOTE 1** – Consider the cast of characters timelessly RECORDED in this one chapter (including but not limited to): Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Samson, Jephthah, Samuel, David and the prophets (i.e., umbrella term).

**FYI** – This is a veritable WHO’S WHO list of the Old Testament!

**NOTE 2** – There are many more figures that we could talk about (BEYOND those noted in Hebrews 11). What about New Testament figures like John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Matthew, Thomas, Paul, John Mark, and many more! Scripture is REplete with notable characters.

**KEY** – Much like the statues noted beforehand, these men and women have been enshrined for our consideration and remembrance—NOT with marble or bronze, but with the written word. This LEADS to a vital QUESTION...

**Q. How should we regard these memorialized figures?**

This is NO light or trivial question...

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3

OF COURSE...

### 1) Many are Figures of Exceeding Heroism, Faith and Godliness

**Noah** – Utilized by God to construct an ark that preserved life in the midst of the Great Flood  
**Abraham** – Arguably the “most important” figure re: God’s plan to save humanity beyond Christ  
**Jacob** – The progenitor of the nation of Israel (i.e., his children would comprise the tribes of Israel)  
**Moses** – Used by the Lord to deliverer the people of Israel from bondage; the Great Lawgiver of Ex.  
**Gideon/Samson**– Heroes from the Book of Judges used to bring freedom from foreign oppression  
**Samuel** – A judge of Israel and a mighty prophet of God used to anoint King Saul and King David  
**David** – Warrior; Psalmist; King; Man after God’s own heart; Eternal Dynasty via Jesus Christ  
**Jonah** – Used by the Lord to spark much-needed revival among the people of Nineveh

AND YET...

### 2) Many are Figures of Exceeding Villainy, Spiritual Immorality and Failure

**Noah** – Got drunk following the deliverance of God and cursed his child  
**Abraham** – Was guilty of gross unbelief, cowardice and deception (multiple occ)  
**Jacob** – Guilty of spiritual manipulation, deception and an array of blatant misdeeds  
**Moses** – Moses was guilty of murder and—at a critical moment—a discrediting temper  
**Rahab** – This was a woman with a history of prostitution (not regarded by her own people)  
**Gideon/Samson** – Men who were either given to cowardice or overconfidence in their abilities  
**Samuel** – He may have been a great prophet, but he was likely a poor father (wayward children)  
**David** – Does time really permit me to touch upon the darker moments (i.e., Bathsheba, etc.)  
**Jonah** – Ran from the call of God and took no pleasure in the repentance of the Ninevites

**KEY** – And this carries into the NT. For EVERY revered figure you will see shameful moments!

**Peter (+)** – Preeminent apostle; keynote speaker at Pentecost; authored 1 & 2 Peter  
**Peter (-)** – Suffered from foot-in-mouth disease; given to pride; denied knowing Christ

**James & John (+)** – Preeminent apostles; first apostolic martyr, author of John & 1, 2, and 3 John  
**James & John (-)** – These men wanted to call down fire on their perceived enemies (tempestuous)

**Matthew (+)** – Matthew wrote the Gospel according to Matthew and served as an apostle of Jesus  
**Matthew (-)** – Matthew was once a tax collector who stole from his fellow man in traitorous fashion

**Paul (+)** – Arguably the greatest Christian thinker, writer and missionary to ever live  
**Paul (-)** – Was responsible for the imprisonment/death of innocent men and women

**KEY** – We could spend all day putting forth such examples! I love that the Bible NEVER whitewashes the memory or legacy of biblical heroes and heroines. It NEVER emphasizes their glories while downplaying their tremendous failings. We see them as they truly were—i.e., “warts and all.”

## TRANSITIONS

**FYI** – You may be wondering: “Pastor, WHY are you telling us this? WHAT is the point and/or takeaway?”

This teaching is NOT an exercise in abstraction. Rather, there are deeply PRACTICAL points that we can derive from what I have noted thus far. We do well to remember the teaching of the apostle Paul to the Romans in to his protégé, Timothy...

### **Romans 15:4a (Emphasis Mine)**

4 . . . **everything** that was written in the past was written to teach us . . .

### **2 Timothy 3:16–17 (Emphasis Mine)**

16 **All** Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**KEY** – ALL that Scripture records is profitable and for our benefit [EVEN the (+) and (-) of the FIGURES it presents].

## POINTS 1–2

### **1) Let Us Learn from the Heroism, Faith and Strengths of these Ancient Figures**

The figures we have noted this morning and beyond provide for us a TEMPLATE of what to do and how to live before God and amongst men. They show us what we can BECOME in Christ, and what He can do in and through those who look to Him. This is a particularly timely lesson in our generation. IF we want to see the results they saw in their times, let US live like they did in ours!

**KEY** – Let us be inspired by the...

**Boldness** of Daniel – Who remained faithful to the Lord even at the potential cost of his own life

**Integrity** of Joseph – Who resisted the advances of a powerful woman (faithful to God and his lord)

**Kindness** of Tabitha/Dorcas – Who was known for her compassionate and consideration of the poor

**Perseverance** of Paul – Who was tireless in his work to preach the Gospel to the whole of humanity

**Passion** of King David – Who knew what it meant to worship the Lord with the fulness of his being

**Selflessness** of John the Baptist – Who was willing to decrease in influence that Christ might inc.

**Leadership** of Moses – Who—for decades—led His people through the wilderness to the P.L.

**Faith** of Abraham – Who was willing to trust God for the impossible and the inconceivable

### **2) Let Us Learn—ALSO—from their Failures and Villainy**

These figures also provide for us a template of what NOT to do and/or how NOT to live before God and amongst men. They show us what WE can become if and when we STRAY into sinfulness (i.e., thinking that our way is best). IF we want to avoid divine penalty and earthly pain/sorrow—and IF we want to leave behind an untarnished legacy—we do well to AVOID their sin and costly spiritual detours!

**KEY** – Take some time to DEEPLY consider that the same POTENTIAL for greatness or villainy exists within you! Remember the commentary of the apostle Paul (i.e., Romans 15:4a): “4 . . . everything that was written in the past was written to teach us.”

## POINT 3

### 3) Let It Inform How You View Others

**NOTE** – Do not be so quick to JUDGE others by their MOMENTS of failing. Likely YOU are just as guilty...

#### **Matthew 7:1–5**

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

**Q. What if you judged the whole of DAVID’S life by his INCIDENT with Bathsheba?**

**Q. Would you not reach a conclusion re: David quite DIFFERENT from that of the Lord?**

**KEY** – This does NOT mean that we give sin a pass! We call men and women to repent of sin lest they fall prey to the judgment of God. It DOES mean that we leave that judgment to God Himself. This FREES us to love, serve, and warn everyone we meet EQUALLY!

**FYI** – For those who are quick to TOPPLE or VANDALIZE statues of past figures, be careful. As you judge the past by the morality of 2020, future generations WILL well judge you by the standards of their era. Things you tolerate now WILL one day be condemned. The statues you erect today MAY well be taken down by your grandchildren. But I digress...

## POINT 4

### 4) Let It Drive You to the Lord (Pt. 1)

**FYI** – A deep consideration of the work of God in the lives of imperfect individuals causes me to WONDER...

**Q. IF God could work in the lives of broken men and women in the past, why not NOW and why not ME?**

**Q. If God could forgive someone like Moses—WHY NOT someone like me?**

**Q. If God could restore someone like King David— WHY NOT someone like me?**

**Q. If God could call or choose someone like Abraham— WHY NOT someone like me?**

**Q. If God could use/empower someone like the ap. Peter— WHY NOT someone like me?**

**Q. If the Lord could see ‘past’ the past of a figure like Rahab— WHY NOT someone like me?**

**Q. If God could grant victory to/through someone like Gideon— WHY NOT someone like me?**

**KEY** – When we read the accounts of biblical figures, we are reading so much MORE than history. We are reading what God can do in, through and for anyone of any era because He has NOT changed! Biblical characters MAY come and go in the reading, but NOT Him. Remember (cf. Heb. 13:8): He “is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

## POINT 5 & FINAL COMMENTS

### 5) Let It Drive You to the Lord—i.e., Jesus Christ (Pt. 2)

**FYI** – In the end, only ONE man was and is PERFECT.

I have READ of many great men and women in my studies...

I have MET many great men and women in the course of living...

...And I have NOT yet met or engaged one that I would deem perfect in any way — SAVE ONE...

**KEY** – Only JESUS has been given the Name above every name and only He shall be universally confessed (without exception) as LORD (cf. Phil. 2). He is the ONLY figure that the Word of God TRULY venerates and puts forth as an appropriate object of worship.

**NOTE** – The Bible may call us to LEARN from the examples of David, Moses, Abraham, Jacob, Peter, John, Paul, etc., but it calls us to serve and worship Christ ALONE. And that is a DECISION that I have made, and it has proven to be a wise one (for time and eternity).

**Q. Yet is it a decision that you have made? What say you?**

**Q. Why not now? Why not today? Do you want to trust Him?**

### CONCLUSION PT. 1

**NOTE** – I praise the Lord for the NATION in which I live. For ALL her faults, I would choose to live NOWHERE else (even in these times of testing). Whatever our decisions as Americans in this PERILOUS season re: historical figures and monuments, we have NO sanction to TOPPLE or REMOVE the remembrance of the biblical figures noted today.

**1) Let Us Study Them (i.e., “Warts and All”)**

**2) Let Us Learn from Their Examples (+) & (-)**

**3) Let Them Drive Us to Christ in ALL His Glory**

### CONCLUSION PT. 2

**KEY** – Thank you for taking the time to join us today. Should those of you who have joined us online wish to give, please do so through the giving portal of our church WEBSITE ([www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://www.NewLifeBarre.org)). For those who are present, you may place your donation in the OFFERING BOXES in this Sanctuary.

#### Numbers 6:24–26

24 The Lord bless you  
and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.