

Coach House Church BEACONS

GODS CHAMPIONS PT 2

24TH JULY 2020

In Hebrews chapter 11 it sets out a long list of champions of the bible, people of great faith and trust in God, who did not have an easy ride by any stretch of the imagination and who succeeded, overcame and finished the task they had been given. They are called champions because they have run the race of life and been successful in reaching the prize of heaven and a well done from God himself. We all like gratification, whether it's a simple nod from someone that we are doing the right thing, to an outspoken 'thanks' or a public recognition of our efforts. However, the bible warns about what we know already – nothing is gained without effort or pain or struggle.

Comparing life's journey to an endurance race is no accident, as it says in Hebrews:

12: And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. [a] Because of the joy[b] awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honour beside God's throne.

There are also many others who could be added to the gallery of faith in Hebrews 11. Those we would class as champions who have retained their trust in God despite exceptional circumstances because they have a sure and certain hope.

I'm going to describe some of them briefly here.

Corrie Ten Boom was part of a Dutch Christian family. She trained to be a watchmaker like her grandfather and father, and in 1922 became the first female licensed as a watchmaker in Holland. At the age of 48, she decided she had to do something to help the Jews who were suffering persecution. She devised a way to assist those needing aid, and planned out the idea of the family's house being used as a refuge. Since the watchmaker's shop had many customers constantly coming and going, it was the perfect secret location, since it didn't easily raise

suspicious. The secret room built into Corrie's bedroom behind a false wall became the hiding place and refuge for both Jews and those who were members of the resistance movement, sought out by the Gestapo and Dutch authorities. This small space was the size of a small wardrobe closet and could hold up to six people at a time.

On February 28, 1944, Corrie and her family were betrayed and arrested, then sent to the Ravensbruck concentration camp. During their time in the concentration camp after long, hard days of work, Corrie and her sister Betsie held worship services in their barracks with the other women. Betsie or I would open the Bible. Because only the Hollanders could understand the Dutch text, we would translate aloud in German. And then we would hear the life-giving words passed back along the aisles in French, Polish, Russian, Czech, and back into Dutch. They were little previews of heaven, these evenings beneath the light bulb."

Corrie was miraculously released from prison due to a "clerical error." At the age of 53, Corrie started a worldwide ministry that took her to more than 60 countries over the next 33 years. She wrote many books, including her 1971 best-selling book *The Hiding Place*. She was honoured by the State of Israel for her work in aiding the Jewish people and was invited to plant a tree in the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles near Jerusalem. She would never have imagined how much of an influence she would have around the world.

Pastor Chen was well educated and came from a wealthy background as his father was a factory owner. When Communism took over the country he was imprisoned for 18 years in a prison work camp in China. One of his greatest hardships was that he had no privacy to worship, pray, read, or memorize the Scripture. He was under constant surveillance. Frequently, he prayed that God would allow him a place of privacy so he could enjoy fellowship with God.

Soon the prison officials gave him a new assignment. In order to break his spirit and indoctrinate him further they gave him the most difficult work assignment in the camp. They assigned him to the camp cesspool. The sewer pit where he worked served 60,000 prisoners. His assignment was to scoop out human waste to be used for fertilizer. No one else wanted the job because it was lonely and repulsive and they feared deadly diseases. To withstand the hardship, he would sing, pray, and quote Scripture aloud. One day it occurred to him that his assignment was a specific answer to prayer. None of the guards would get anywhere near him. He worked completely alone. He could pray, sing, and quote

Scripture as loud as he wanted! He began to thank God and rejoice. There was no one there to hear him but his faithful God. His cesspool assignment lasted six years, and miraculously he never contracted a disease from it.

When he was released, the church had exploded in growth and vitality. He travelled to poor villages where he saw the hand of God at work. He represented the cause of the suffering church in China around the world. God is not restricted by any barriers-even a cesspool.

Billy Graham grew up on a dairy farm in North Carolina. He was told: "At best, all you could amount to would be a poor country Baptist preacher somewhere out in the sticks. . . . You have a voice that pulls. God can use that voice of yours. He can use it mightily." He was ordained as a baptist preacher and was a good friend of Martin Luther King. He spoke to more than 215 million people in more than 185 countries and territories. Graham met with 12 U.S. presidents. Not bad for someone who wouldn't amount to much.

Brother Andrew In July 1955, a young man called Andrew stepped off the train in Warsaw's Central Station, carrying a suitcase containing a change of clothes, and hundreds of booklets with the title 'The Way of Salvation'. He'd travelled to a youth communist festival, with the aim of telling young people the truth of Jesus. That trip changed his life. There, behind the Iron Curtain, he first met Christians who were persecuted for their faith. Ever since that day Brother Andrew, as he's now known, has dedicated himself to the task of supporting and strengthening persecuted Christians, first in the Communist countries of Europe, then further afield. He was miraculously waved through the customs control at the Romanian border while his car was full of bibles. This was the beginning of Open Doors. Thanks to Brother Andrew's desire to say 'Yes' to God's promptings, Open Doors now works in over 60 countries around the world, supporting and strengthening the church in the midst of trial and persecution.

Could any of these modern day Champions ever imagine the magnitude of their influence on other Christians? Absolutely not.

Billy Graham said: 'Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion-it is a daily process where you grow to be more like Christ.' So, another race analogy - it's more like a marathon more than a sprint. And Brother Andrew simply said: 'One man with God is a majority.'

With God – not standing alone but with the support, strength and direction of God, through his Holy Spirit. God's champions are not superheroes. They are ordinary people who listen, trust and follow what God tells them to do.

2 Tim 4:7-8 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.8 And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.



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