

Hebrews 11:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,
obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

Analysis

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, This verse begins summarizing faith's diverse accomplishments through Old Testament saints. 'Subdued kingdoms' references conquests by Joshua, David, and other leaders who defeated powerful enemies through faith in God's power. 'Wrought righteousness' (eirgasanto dikaiosynēn, ειργασαντο δικαιοσύνην) describes administering justice and living uprightly—Samuel, David, and prophets established God's standards in society.

'Obtained promises' (epetychon epangeliōn, ἐπέτυχον ἐπαγγελιῶν) indicates receiving specific promised blessings—Abraham receiving Isaac, David obtaining kingdom, Israel inheriting Canaan. Yet verse 39 clarifies they didn't receive the ultimate promise (Messiah) in their lifetimes. They obtained temporal fulfillments while awaiting eternal consummation, demonstrating that faith's rewards include both present blessings and future hope.

'Stopped the mouths of lions' clearly references Daniel in the lions' den (Daniel 6) and possibly David's and Samson's lion victories (1 Samuel 17:34-37; Judges 14:5-6). God's miraculous deliverance from deadly beasts demonstrates His sovereignty over creation and ability to protect His faithful servants. This encourages believers facing hostile, deadly opposition—the same God who shut lions' mouths can protect His people through any danger when it serves His purposes.

Historical Context

Israel's history features numerous examples of each category. Joshua subdued Canaanite kingdoms; David established Israel's greatest kingdom through faith. Judges like Samuel and kings like Josiah 'wrought righteousness' by reforming worship and justice. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and David all 'obtained promises' of descendants, land, and kingdom. Daniel's lion's den deliverance (c. 539 BC) occurred during Babylonian captivity when remaining faithful to God required civil disobedience. These varied examples show faith's relevance across different historical circumstances—conquest, governance, persecution, exile. Each generation faces unique challenges requiring contextualized faith in the unchanging God.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What 'kingdoms'—personal strongholds of sin or opposition—must you subdue through faith in God's power?
2. How are you called to 'work righteousness' in your sphere of influence through faith-empowered obedience?
3. What promises of God are you currently trusting Him to fulfill, and how does faith sustain you while waiting?

Interlinear Text

οἵ διὰ πίστεως κατηγωνίσαντο βασιλείας εἰργάσαντο

Who through faith subdued kingdoms wrought

G3739 G1223 G4102 G2610 G932 G2038

δικαιοσύνην ἐπέτυχον ἐπαγγελιῶν ἔφραξαν στόματα

righteousness obtained promises stopped the mouths

G1343 G2013 G1860 G5420 G4750

λεόντων

of lions

G3023

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 10:36 (Covenant): For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

Galatians 3:16 (Covenant): Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Hebrews 11:17 (Faith): By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

Psalms 144:10 (Kingdom): It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.

Psalms 91:13 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

1 Peter 5:8 (Kingdom): Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

2 Timothy 4:17 (Parallel theme): Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

