

The Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11:1-39)

Hebrew 11 is known as the Hall of Faith. This is different from the 'hall of fame.' When the curtain on this life lifts, the world will be shocked to find out who the real winners of life are. A whole lot of people whom many envied and thought to be lucky will turn out to be most pitiful of all. And many who were despised and rejected will turn out to be the most enviable of all. *Hebrews* was written to Christians under intense persecution and pressure. The true riches of our incorruptible inheritance in God will be revealed in the last days. (1 Pet 1:3-9) Our faith is being refined through the fiery trials of life, and this is more precious than pure gold.

A. The Hall of Faith (11:1-3)

1. The way of faith is the only way to live before God. Only by their life of faith, the spiritual fathers and mothers have obtained a good testimony from God. There is no other pathway in God.
 - (i) Only faith can give us the proper perspective, i.e., the *biblical worldview*, so we can rightly relate to the world and understand how life works.
 - (ii) Our faith connects us to the eternal world while our senses connect us to the material world. Our faith can plug into the hidden invisible realities behind the visible and the physical, and into the goodness of God and His unchanging promises in the Word.
 - (iii) Faith values the invisible and eternal over the visible and temporal – the theme of Hebrews 11. Faith esteems what God says over what man says. Faith values eternal gain over temporal gain. Hebrews 11 shows what faith looks like through the lives of those who truly succeeded in life. After the curtain on this life lifts, who will stand tall and who will whimper in shame? And why?
2. This hall of faith is chronologically summed up under four sections.
 - (i) Faith of the pre-flood generation
 - (ii) Faith of the patriarchs
 - (iii) Faith of Moses
 - (iv) Faith of others after Moses

B. Faith of the Pre-flood Generations (11:4-7)

1. Abel & Cain [Worship] – Abel offered God an acceptable offering of sacrifice. Without faith, we cannot even give God offerings acceptable to Him. God will not accept our worship if it does not come from faith in our hearts.
2. Enoch & people of his generation [Fellowship] – Enoch was taken by God without tasting death.

'And Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him.' (Gen 5:24) *'for before Enoch was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that he is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.'* (Heb 11:5-6, C.f. Elijah - 2 Kgs 2:11)

Enoch sought God diligently and pleased Him. Enoch's faith enabled him to walk with God.
3. Noah & people of his generation [Salvation] – Noah prepared the ark by faith for many years (70-100 years). By faith, Noah was moved with godly fear concerning the judgment coming upon the whole world. And he built the ark and his act of faith saved his household, and condemned the world who did not believe his message. He was saved by the ark. We are facing the days of Noah just before Christ's return.

C. Faith of the Patriarchs (11:8-22)

1. Abraham
 - (i) The call from Ur - *'Abraham went out not knowing where he was going...'* (11:8). This cost Abraham at seventy-five, leaving the most advanced city. Abraham put God's word above his circumstances.

- (ii) He dwelt in the promised land in tents and waiting patiently with his son for many years. *'By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'* (11:9) Something happened to Abraham's heart while patiently waiting for the promised land. He began to see the eternal city beyond the rugged terrains of Judea.
 - (iii) By faith Abraham and Sarah both received the supernatural strength to give birth to the promised son – with bodies as good as dead - from whom came forth the multitudes as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore (11:11-12).
 - (iv) These all died in faith without seeing the fulfilment of the promise in their lifetime, but having seen it they embraced the promise and welcomed it. They confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (11:13-14), they were merely passing through the land. They declared plainly that they were seeking a home in heaven, the heavenly city prepared by God. *'Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God.'* (11:16) Their faith that sought the eternal kingdom above the early kingdom pleased God immensely. God was proud of Abraham.
 - (v) By faith Abraham offered up Isaac when he was tested (11:17). Abraham believed in God and knew His faithfulness. The only possible conclusion he could draw was - God will raise up Isaac from the dead (11:19).
2. Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph – By faith they all blessed their children with God's promise concerning the land of Canaan which they did not even own. At the time of death, Jacob worshiped God with his last breath leaning on his staff, and Joseph gave instruction to bury his bones in the promised land (11:20-22). Their faith reached beyond the grave into eternity.

D. Faith of Moses (11:23-29)

1. Moses' parents had faith, which gave them boldness to defy the king's evil command. They hid Moses for three months (11:23). This was an act of courage and righteousness when infanticide of the Hebrew baby boys was the law of the land. This was like an abortion mandate.
2. Moses' faith:
 - (i) Moses refused the privileges of being a prince of Egypt and chose to share the suffering of God's people (11:24-26). It was a choice that came out of faith. It cost Moses 40 years of his life at the backside of the desert as a forgotten man. *'Moses forsook Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king.'* (11:27). Moses must have inherited his parent's daring faith to defy the evil authorities of his day.

Why did he make this costly choice? *'Moses esteemed the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.'*

The courage to abandon the work on which one's heart is set, and accept inaction cheerfully as the will of God, is of the rarest and highest kind, and can be created and sustained only by the clearest spiritual vision.
 - (ii) How did Moses endure 40 years of being virtually buried alive in the desert? *'For he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.'* (11:27) *'... for he looked for a [eternal] reward.'* (11:26) Moses had a clear vision. He valued eternal reward over temporal reward. That is faith. This eternal perspective on life can only come through faith in God and His Word.
 - (iii) Moses kept the Passover (redemption through the cross) and crossing the red sea (baptism) by faith (11:28-29) and delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt.

E. Faith of Many Expressed in Various Ways (11:30-39)

1. The list of faith goes on to include Joshua & Rahab, Gideon & Barak, Samson & Jephtha, David & Samuel, and the prophets (11:30-32). C.f. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and 3 friends, etc. Those who through faith stood fast on God's word and were victorious as they received God's promises in their lifetime, *'who through their faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong,*

became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again.’ (11:33-35)

2. Then many in the hall of faith paid the ultimate price for their faith and did not receive the promise in their lifetime. These were *‘tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still, others had trial of mocking and scourings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.’ (11:35-38)*

Why? They put their faith in God and in His promises, and treasured the eternal rewards over the transient pleasures of life. This was their faith, and God says, *‘of whom the world is not worthy.’*

3. What is really important in our journey of faith is not whether we receive the fulfilment of God’s promise in this life, but whether we receive God’s testimony. David obtained God’s testimony that he is *‘a man after God’s own heart who will do all My will,’ (Acts 13:22)*. Enoch has received God’s testimony that he pleased God so much that God took him. (11:5) Others were mocked persecuted and died for their faith.

We make many choices each day. Do you put what God says over what men say? Do you put more value on eternal issues than temporal issues?

What will be God’s testimony of your life of faith? That will decide the worth of your life in the end.