

HEBREWS 11 – THE HALL OF FAITH CHAPTER

At the end of Hebrews 10 the writer wraps up the warning section in verses 38 and 39 by saying the just shall live by faith which is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4. He then went on to say in 10:39 that “we (the true believers) are not of those who draw back (apostatize) to perdition, (eternal destruction) but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”

True believers will not apostatize. They may backslide. They may compromise. But they will not completely abandon the faith. A true saving faith perseveres. It endures. This is the test of genuineness! The nature of a saving faith that endures is then illustrated at length in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11 is called the “***The Hall of Faith***” chapter as it gives example after example of true God-honoring faith that pleases God (Heb. 11:6).

There is a definite connection between the strong emphasis on the PERSON and WORK of Christ in chapters 1-10 and then the FAITH chapter that builds on it in chapter 11.

At the end of the day, it all comes down to the issue of FAITH. There are ultimately unbelievers and there are believers. Everyone is in one of those two camps. In the book, the writer of Hebrews has spelled out the truth of Christ at great length, and now he makes the issue that of BELIEF!

Hebrews 11 is the premier chapter in the Bible on FAITH. The reason it is so significant is that it demonstrates that not only is FAITH essential, but that it must be the ***right kind of faith***. It shows us what the right kind of faith looks like. In effect, the chapter illustrates the nature of a true saving faith in the various examples of saving faith put forward.

There is a kind of faith that doesn't save. Even the demons believe, but they are not saved (Ja. 2:19). Hebrews 11 illustrates the nature of a saving faith that pleases God and that without this kind of faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Therefore, the importance of this chapter cannot be overstated.

Hebrews 11:1 begins with a description of faith, and then the very first FAITH issue that the author addresses is that of creation (11:3). No one was there. No one saw it happen.

We have to take God's Word on this. That is faith. By faith we understand the Creation Account. That is why the Bible starts abruptly with Genesis 1:1

with no prologue or long introduction. We are wired with a God-consciousness. We are wired in such a way that even nature testifies to us of the reality of the Creator (cf. Rom. 1). The author goes on to say that without this kind of faith it is impossible to please God. The very first thing one ever does to please God is to come to believe in Him as He has revealed Himself to be. And as noted at the beginning of Hebrews, in these last days God has spoken to us by His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). Revelation is progressive, and as God reveals truth, He then holds people accountable for it (Acts 17:30). Revelation was progressive, but the basic nature of saving faith is always the same in every dispensation.

Hebrews 11 then gives many examples of the nature of true faith throughout the chapter. The words faith, believe, and trust are used interchangeably. In Hebrews 11:6, we see that without faith it is impossible to please God. True faith is the first thing a person ever does to please God. Everything in terms of a saving relationship with God starts with FAITH. Faith is simply taking God at His Word. Faith is always connected to God's Word (cf. Gen. 15:6; Rom. 10:17; 1 Jn. 5:9-10).

As presented in Hebrews 11, as seen in the lives of the OT saints, real faith involves such characteristics as...

1. Faith takes God at His Word even when it doesn't see the promise being fulfilled in the present. Faith rests on the bare Word of God!
2. Faith continues on and dies in faith even if the promises haven't yet been fulfilled.
3. Faith believes that God will yet fulfill all His promises – even if that involves them being fulfilled in the resurrection.
4. Faith has an eternal perspective that looks beyond this life.
5. Faith believes that the best is yet to be beyond this life.

At the end of Hebrews 11 the writer comes full circle to where he started in verse 2. After introducing the topic of faith he said in verse 2 that by faith the elders obtained a good testimony. Then, after giving the many examples in the chapter, his conclusion is “***all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith***” (Heb. 11:39).

These all had a testimony of faith that showed they are approved as people of faith. They had the real deal. A good testimony of faith is a valid testimony! In this, the Hall of Faith chapter, we constantly note throughout the active nature of true faith that is a good testimony. A living faith is active by nature.

Faith is active...

- v. 3 By faith we understand...
- v. 4 By faith Able offered...
- v. 5 By faith Enoch...pleased God...
- v. 7 By faith Noah...prepared an ark...
- v. 8 By faith Abraham obeyed...
- v. 11 By faith Sarah judged Him faithful...
- v. 17 By faith Abraham offered up Isaac...
- v. 20 By faith Isaac blessed...
- v. 21 By faith Jacob worshiped...
- v. 22 By faith Joseph gave instructions...
- v. 23 By faith Moses was hidden...
- v. 24 By faith Moses... chose...
- v. 29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea...
- v. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho were encircled...
- v. 31 By faith Rahab received the spies..
- vv. 32-38 By faith they lived in triumph or died faithful...

Genuine faith demonstrates itself in the life. That is why James says that faith without works is dead. A dead faith is not a saving faith (cf. Ja. 2). In the gospel of John, the word believe is always a verb. A living faith is lively and active by nature! It is this kind of faith that is repeatedly demonstrated in Hebrews 11. Thus, saving faith here is not so much defined as it is described, and it is described as a life-changing active faith that endures to the end.