

insider faith

hebrews 11

Hebrews chapter 11 this morning. At the end of our last passage our author began a section about the importance of faith in our lives and today we come to the famous Hall of Faith as he develops the teaching.

Let's look at our text and see what we see.

Hebrews 11.1-40 - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he 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.

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 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.

By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through 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.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, 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.

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

If God were a stock broker, some might accuse Him of insider trading. He has these incredible spiritual blessings and riches that He makes publicly available, He knows what's going to happen in the future, and He gives us privileged information so that we can get a monumental return on our investment with Him.

All we have to do is buy in. And the buy in is faith. Not works, not status, we buy in with faith.

Faith, as a topic, is very significant in the Bible. Certainly this chapter is a big example of that, but if you look at some of the statements made about faith throughout God's word, you quickly come to the conclusion that it is a significant and essential part of our lives. The Bible says we're to walk by faith. We're to *live* by faith. We're to add to our faith and grow it in our lives. By

faith we're saved. By faith people were healed and, as seen in verse 6 of our text, without faith it is impossible to please God.

At the close of chapter 10 we're compelled by the author to live our lives by faith and at the beginning of chapter 12 we're going to be told to run hard and finish our faith. And in between we have chapter 11, which is a detailed examination of what faith is and how it works in the lives of God's people.

Warren Wiersbe boils it down very well when he writes:

*"Faith is confidence in God that leads to obedience to God. True faith is based on what God says and is demonstrated in what we do. People with faith **do** things for God, and God does things for them.*

Faith is not a luxury; it is a necessity. It is for common people and not just great leaders. We need faith for worshiping as well as for working, walking, waiting and warring. In any area of life where you ignore faith, you will sin."

The flip side of that last statement is that anywhere you walk in faith before God, you will receive reward. That's what's seen in this collection of examples and stories from the dawn of history up until the time of Christ.

Because God knows the future and is a rich rewarder and His desire is to extravagantly lavish His abundant spiritual blessings on us, so He lets us in on the secret that there is a guaranteed return on the investments we make in Him.

And what's great about this collection of stories is that you can see these heavenly principles apply to anyone and everyone who is willing to live a faith filled life. If you will pursue God, it doesn't matter who you are or where you're from, you *will* be blessed beyond measure with a spiritual inheritance that cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

Look at these stories: Some were in palaces, some were in pastures. Some were moms, some were harlots. Some were warriors, some were philosophers, some were temple workers, others were foreigners. Some had very dangerous circumstances, some were blessed with comfort. Some lost their lives, some saved their lives.

There is a huge spread when it comes to the differences of these people's backgrounds and circumstances.

But here's what's common to all of them: When you look back on their lives through history, you see that every one of them was defined by their faith in God and they were directed by that faith. And, in the end they all received an incredible return on their heavenly investment.

Their faith propelled them forward into the will of God and then God was able to do things in their lives that He wanted to do to bless them or protect them or make them a testimony.

Because of that, these people were able to rise above human understanding and see everything differently. They weren't afraid of the threats they received, it didn't matter where they found themselves, their circumstances weren't important, even when it didn't seem like

their lives of faith weren't paying off, there was a confidence in the hope of heaven and a confidence in the insider information God had given them.

Of course, they didn't walk perfectly. There were times of weakness and sin. But their sins were committed when they stopped living by faith. Abraham going to Egypt. Sarah laughing at God's prophecy. David taking his safety into his own hands.

But looking back on their lives as a whole, seeing them through God's eyes, we find that these people were defined and directed by faith in God. And that faith, because it was active, touched every part of their lives. Where they lived, *how* they lived, how they worshiped, how they parented, which conquests to go on, in some cases even what name they would go by.

It was all focused on the idea that Christ will return. He will return for us in the rapture or at the end of our lives to bring us to our real home in heaven. And He will bring a return on our investments. Christ repays. When we invest in worldly things, the return is fire. It's all burned away. When we, by faith, invest our lives in the Lord, the return is great reward. The inheritance that this letter has talked about in earlier chapters.

Last week in chapter 10 we read verses 37 and 38 which say:

Hebrews 10.37-38 - "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."

In just a little while the Lord will be back. Returning not only for me but also bringing a return for what I've done with the days I've been given.

We should think about our lives today in light of these great heroes of faith and in light of the parable of the talents. The master gave 3 servants some coins and left them to invest. Two did as they were told, but the third wasted his time. He buried his coin the ground. There was no investment. And when the master returned he wasn't pleased with what the 3rd servant did.

And as we think about that, we should remember that Christ is going to return. And it is unacceptable for us to not invest in the Lord by living a life of faith. It's unacceptable. Because, first of all, we've been commanded to do it. Secondly, we're guaranteed a huge payoff. Third, we're told here in our chapter that it's the only way we can please God. And fourth, living a life of faith is the only way to receive a proper testimony from the Lord.

But faith doesn't just mean knowing something, it means doing something too. God asks us to buy into His plan by mortgaging our lives and depositing them into His hands.

If Steve Jobs had found you somewhere in 2005 and showed you his time machine and said, "I'm from the future. Just before I died I built the iTime Machine and now I've come back to tell you that you should buy as much Apple stock as you can because in 2013 that investment, left alone, will be worth ten times whatever you put in!" Looking at his time machine, we probably would've bought a share or two. If he took you on a ride in his time machine and proved what he was saying was true, then you'd probably sell your house and buy as much Apple stock as you possibly could. Because after a short 8 years, you'd have 10 times the return. It would be foolish not to make the investment.

When we look at the Bible and see what God has said and when we see what He's done in our lives and how He has proven Himself, when we see the promises He has made and the testimonies that He has put on display for us, there is no reason to not live a life of faith before Him. There's no reason to hold back any part of our lives and bury it in the ground of this world.

Because, our lives are the talent. And this world isn't worthy of us. And soon and very soon our King is coming.

Since that is true, then the substance of our lives today should be faith and the activities of faith. Our faith in Christ should touch everything we do so that our lives are spent being propelled forward in God's will so that His return will be as wonderful and magnificent as the Lord wants it to be.