

I. Introduction to Hebrews 11.

- A. We have come to the most famous chapter in Hebrews: The Hall of Faith.
- B. Hebrews 11 is best understood in its context. 10:23,36-38 12:1f Hab. 2:3
- C. Faith is under attack by the world.
 - 1. Modernism/naturalism/materialism rejects the supernatural.
 - 2. Postmodernism/relativism/pluralism rejects absolute truth.
- D. There is much confusion about faith in the church.
 - 1. Faith is not a blind (irrational) leap.
 - 2. Faith is not gullibility.
 - 3. Faith is not mere intellectual knowledge or assent. James 2:19
 - 4. Faith is not merely a positive mental attitude or a feeling.
 - 5. Faith is not a mind game.
 - 6. Faith is not mere natural belief.
 - 7. Faith is not a power within by which we bring into being what we desire.
 - 8. "Faith" is not merely a positive characteristic shared by all religious people.

II. Faith relies upon God's Word. v. 1

- A. Our author does not give us a comprehensive definition of faith.
 - 1. There is no mention in verse one of repentance, or of the Person and work of Jesus Christ as the object of faith.
 - 2. The focus is upon our need to endure in actively trusting God's Word of promise.
 - a. Highlights what the readers lack.
 - 3. How does our author's view of faith compare to that of Paul? Eph. 2:8-9 Ro. 5:1 II Tim. 1:12
- B. Faith trusts God's promise of future blessings. v. 1a
 - 1. Faith is the *substance* (or *confident assurance*) of things hoped for. 1:3 3:14 II Co. 9:4 11:17
 - 2. Faith is closely aligned with hope (in God's promise). 3:6 6:11,18 7:19 10:23
 - 3. Faith is not a blind leap, gullibility, or mere humanistic optimism.
- C. Faith grasps the reality of invisible spiritual truth. v. 1b
 - 1. By faith we perceive unseen spiritual realities which cannot be experienced by our physical senses. II Kings 6:15-17
 - 2. Faith is supernaturally given by the Holy Spirit. Eph. 2:1-5,10 Jo. 6:44 Acts 16:14 I Co. 2:14
 - 3. Faith is logical, reasonable, and certain.
 - 4. Faith is grounded on God's revealed Word. 1:1f Rom. 10:17 Js. 1:18 I Pe. 1:23 I Thess. 2:13 John 20:29
 - 5. We live by faith, not by sight. 11:27 II Cor. 5:7 4:18 I Pe. 1:8 Col. 3:1-4

III. Faith acts upon God's Word and gains His approval: The historical perspective. v. 2

- A. Our author inspires us to active, enduring faith through the example of godly men and women from past: the "cloud of witnesses." 12:1

1. Our author demonstrates how we are to utilize the Old Testament.
 - a. The Old Testament points to Christ. 1:1-10:39
 - b. The Old Testament provides examples of faith (and unbelief) from which we should learn. 3:2,19 4:11 6:12-13 12:1f I Cor. 10:11 Luke 17:32
 2. He surveys the Old Testament.
 - a. Introduction. v. 1-2
 - b. From creation through Noah. v. 3-7 Gen. 1-10
 - c. Abraham and the other patriarchs. v. 8-22 Gen. 11-50
 - d. Moses (the Exodus) through Joshua (Jericho). v. 23-31 Exodus-Joshua
 - e. The Judges, the Kings, and the Prophets. v. 32-38 Judges-Malachi
 - f. Concluding summary. v. 39-40
 3. These people directed their lives by faith in the invisible reality of God's promises. 11:7,10,13,27,31,35-38
 4. Faith works in a variety of situations with a variety of outcomes (in this life).
- B. By faith the ancients gained God's commendation. *Divine passive.* 11:4-5,39**
1. God's approval is what matters the most. Pr. 29:25 Mt. 25:21 Luke 6:26
 2. God's approval can only be gained through faith. 11:6
 3. Faith is not a new concept. Gen. 15:6 Hab. 2:3-4 Rom. 4:1f
- C. Imitate their faith.**
1. These men and women rested upon the unseen promises of God and regulated their whole lives by their hope. 11:13,16,39
 2. Saving faith works. Eph. 2:8-10
 3. These saints were imperfect (flawed) recipients of grace.
 4. We are one people with them. 3:6 Rom. 11:7 Eph. 2:11f

IV. Concluding applications: We are in a battle for faith. Ro. 10:17 Ps. 34:8 I Cor. 2:9

Discussion questions

1. How do modernists look upon our faith?
2. How do post-modernists look upon our faith?
3. What is wrong with each of the following statements?
 - a. Faith is a blind (irrational) leap.
 - b. Believers are just gullible.
 - c. Faith is simply intellectual assent with the gospel.
 - d. Faith is just having a positive mental attitude.
 - e. Putting your faith in Christ is like putting your faith in a chair when you sit in it.
 - f. By faith we speak health and prosperity into our lives.
 - g. All people of faith are essentially the same.
4. How does our author's view of faith compare to that of Paul?
5. Does our author give a comprehensive definition of faith?
If not, what is he doing?
6. What are the essential qualities of faith expressed in Hebrews 11:1?
7. How does one get faith?
8. How does our author use the Old Testament in this chapter?
9. By what kind of faith did the saints of old gain God's approval?
10. What relationship between faith and works is implied in Hebrews 11?
11. How will your faith influence:
 - a. How you respond to temptation (lust, greed, lies, etc)?
 - b. How you respond to trials?
 - c. How you spend your time and money?