

THE BIBLICAL “HALL OF FAITH”

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The book of Hebrews was prepared for Jewish Christians who were under assault for having severed their ties to the Mosaic regime reverting to the faith of Christ.
2. Unquestionably the pressure was weighing heavily on some of these saints.
3. The allegation was being made by false teachers that Jesus was not the real Messiah. Rather, the genuine deliverer was yet to appear.
4. Thus these Jewish Christians were constantly and harshly harassed to abandon “the faith”, the true gospel of Christ, and wait for the true Messiah as the Jews, still following the Law of Moses, considered him to be.
5. But the author’s logic is persuasive. Jesus was the real, promised One of O.T. literature, the design of which had been to prepare for the Lord’s earthly arrival.
6. The superiority of the New Covenant over the Old is a primary fact in the book of Hebrews.
7. As a practical matter, the book is a devastating argument against the Calvinistic heresy that it is impossible for a child of God to fall away from the faith and be lost.
8. The book falls into two major categories: 1st, Doctrinal (1:1-10:18); 2nd Practical (10:19-13:25).
9. In this study, our focus is especially upon chapter eleven, which is sometimes designated as the “Biblical Hall of Fame,” or the “Hall of Faith.”
10. At the conclusion of Ch.10, the sacred writer reminded these Jewish saints of the prophetic affirmation announced by the 7th century B.C. prophet, Habakkuk, who declared: “The righteous shall live by his faith,” V.38. (Hab.2:4)
11. Being troubled by negative influences, the recipients of this epistle were in grave danger of abandoning their faith and forfeiting their hope of heaven (Cf. 6:4-8; 10:26-31).
12. The inspired writer therefore admonished and encouraged these Christians to renew their vigor for the life of faith (or faithfulness).
13. One mode of assisting them in achieving this goal was to remind them of these noble and determined saints of O.T. history who, though plagued with weaknesses themselves, ultimately persevered.
14. We too can learn from this O.T. history (Rom.15:4; 1Cor.10:11).
15. The contents of Ch.11 can be divided into three general sections:
 - a. Faith defined, Vv.1,2.
 - b. Faith illustrated, Vv.3-38.

- c. Faith consummated, Vv.39,40, where we shall place some special focus in an examination of the enigmatic conclusion which, for many, remains shrouded in mystery.
- 16. First, we shall briefly survey the 1st and 2nd sections of Ch.11, then focus on Vv.39,40.

II. DISCUSSION

A. FAITH DEFINED, Vv.1,2.

- 1. Here faith is depicted as the “substance” (KJV), or “assurance” (ASV, ESV), of things hoped for, the “evidence(KJV), or “conviction” (ASV, ESV), of things not seen.
- 2. The underlying Greek term in the first instance is *hypostasis*, literally to “stand under.”
 - a. In the O.T. (*LXX*) the expression could suggest the “basis of power” (Cf. Ezek.26:11).
 - b. Or a reality that provides a firm guarantee (Ruth 1:12; Psa.39:7).
- 3. The following term, “conviction” (*elenchus*) (KJV, ASV,ESV), denotes a persuasion, but not in the subjective sense; it is the conviction that stands upon solid, objective evidence – in this case, the revelation of God’s truth (Cf. Rom.10:17).
 - a. This faith looks toward things not yet revealed, but is fueled by evidence and hope.
 - b. Subjective “faith,” by itself, is not sufficient to generate the quality he described.
 - (1) As Lenski observed: “Truth alone justifies [one] for believing or trusting” (Lenski, R.C.H., 1966, 375, *Interpretation of Hebrews & James*).
 - (2) Another scholar says: “faith stands on revelation, word, and promise of God” (Kittel, G. et. al. 1985, 222. *Theological Dict. of the N.T. – Abridged*).
- 4. Hence, faith (grounded upon reasonable evidence) is:
 - a. The foundation of things for which the Christian hopes.
 - b. The “conviction” (tangible demonstration) of those things not yet in view.
- 5. To under gird this proposition, the author further appeals to:
 - a. The testimony and example of “the elders,” i.e., notable monuments of faith who lived in antiquity, V.2.
 - b. The fact that the universe has been divinely designed, “framed,” V.3 (*katarizo* – to “prepare for a purpose” (Danker, F.W. et al. 2000, 526. (*Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.*). Cf. Psa.19:1; Rom.1:20.
- 6. Moreover, the universe was created *ex nihilo*, i.e., “out of nothing” by the word of God.
 - a. He spoke (Cf. Psa.33:6-9), and it was done.
 - b. The phrase, “God said,” occurs ten times in Gen.1.

- c. Modern science has absolutely no evidence of an eternal universe, nor of one spontaneously self-created, i.e., by the “Big Bang” theory, etc.
- B. FAITH ILLUSTRATED, 11:3-38.
- 1. In Vs.3-38, the inspired writer discusses faith *qualitatively*.
 - 2. He deals with the faith of the patriarchs, Vv.8-22.
 - 3. In Vv.4-38 he discusses the faith of those involved in the founding of the nation of Israel.
 - a. Therein fifteen different personalities are mentioned – from Abel, the son of Adam and Eve, to David, Israel’s greatest king – along with other O.T. worthies.
 - 4. The expression “by faith” is found eighteen times in Heb.11, mostly associated with action verbs.
 - a. Abel “offered” a sacrifice.
 - b. Noah “prepared” and ark.
 - c. Abraham “obeyed” God, departing from his homeland and entering a new country.
 - d. Moses “refused” his princely role in Egypt, and “chose” to leave that land; he “forsook” Egypt’s treasures.
 - e. Israel “passed through” the Red Sea, and later “circled” Jericho.
 - 5. One issue stands out: Faith is not just a *mental* disposition of merely “believing.”
 - a. It is a *trusting confidence* combined with *submissive obedience* to Almighty God (see Wayne Jackson, 2005, 415-418. *The Acts of the Apostles from Jerusalem to Rome*. Stockton, CA: Christian Courier Publications).
 - b. This fundamental truth the world of “Christendom” desperately needs to learn.
- C. FAITH CONSUMMATED, Vv.39,40.
- 1. The concluding two verses are the most mysterious of all, due to the seeming obscurity of the language.
 - a. KJV: “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, receive not the promise. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”
 - b. ASV: “And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”
 - 2. Four facts are evident from these two verses:
 - a. Those O.T. worthies who lived by faith had witness provided to them of a wonderful promise for the future.
 - b. That promise was not realized fully in their lifetime.
 - c. Rather, something “better” than what they had was yet to arrive; for it was that “better thing” God had provided for us, which they could not obtain “without us.”

- d. This “better thing” was to be brought to “perfection” (*teleioo – completion*) on behalf of the two groups – them and us – (O.T. saints and Christians) in concert – to act in conjunction. **Exactly what was that better thing God had prepared to be realized by the two groups in concert?**
- 3. It refers to their **Redemption** in and through Jesus Christ.
 - a. Remember this: The only atoning sacrifice of the pre-Christian era was that of animals.
 - b. And as Heb.10:4 says: “It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.”
 - c. Yet, “part from the shedding of blood” no remission was possible as declared by Heb.9:22.
 - d. Accordingly, those animal sacrifices could not “make perfect” those for whom such were offered. The repetitious nature of those offerings was evidence of this according to Heb.10:1,2.
 - e. Thus, the sacrificial ceremonies of the O.T. economy brought pardon only on a promissory basis (contingent upon the death of Christ), but not fully implemented under the Law of Moses (except in the sense that God’s redemptive plan was *certain* to be accomplished in due time).
 - f. In Gal.4:4,5, the Apostle Paul declared: “[W]hen the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might *redeem them that were under the law*.”
 - g. Again, in Heb.9:15: “And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the *redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant*, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance
- 4. It also refers to their **Ultimate Glory**.
 - a. Though the O.T. saints were to embrace a grand reward upon their deaths, they were not to receive the full measure of eternal glory “apart from us [Christians].”
 - b. Instead according to the divine time-table, the entire company of the saved from all eras are to achieve the goal “complete” (“perfect”) at the *same* time – not one segment apart from the other.
 - c. On the final day of earth’s history (at the final judgment of all men), all the righteous – past and present, living and dead, at the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ, -- will receive their incorruptible bodies and inhabit heaven in the fullest sense of that expression (Dan.12:2; Jno.5:28,29; Ac.24:15; 1Cor.15:21-58).
- 5. The glorious fact is, *both* of these truths will find their full reality according to the grand conclusion set forth in Heb.11:39,40.

III. CONCLUSION

1. What a marvelous chapter is Heb.11!

(Notes gleaned from the CHRISTIAN COURIER, Oct. 2010, Article by Wayne Jackson titled, “The Biblical “Hall of Faith”, pp.4-7.)