

Hebrews

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[0 : 00] We are beginning chapter 11 of Hebrews this morning and it has commonly been referred to as God's Hall of Faith.

We are very familiar with men's Hall of Fame, whether it's football or baseball or whatever it is, but this is commonly referred to as God's Hall of Faith or the Heroes of Faith.

There are several examples that are given throughout this chapter and each one of them is designed to stimulate us to faithfulness and perseverance, primarily because the track record that God has established in the lives of each of these individuals make Him a worthy recipient of our faith and our trust.

So let's just begin with a simple definition of faith as is given here in opening the chapter. Look at some of the other alternate renderings regarding the definition of faith and then we'll entertain any comments or questions you may have before we go on.

Reminding you once again that the bold print is from the King James, which is the lead translation and all the others follow, faith is the substance of things hoped for.

[1 : 19] Faith is assurance of things hoped for. Weymouth says faith is a confident assurance of that for which we hope.

Rhames says, but faith is of things hoped for a confidence. Moffat, now faith means that we are confident of what we hope for.

But faith forms a solid ground for what is hoped for. That's the Berkeley translation. Beckwith says, faith is being sure of the things we hope for.

Now faith, Montgomery says, faith is the title deed of things hoped for. New English Bible, and what is faith? Faith gives substance to our hopes.

And the 20th century New Testament says, faith is the realization of things hoped for. You'll notice that in almost each one of these, every one of these definitions, the word hope is used.

[2 : 21] And we have defined hope a number of times in the past as meaning something entirely different from the way we use the word in our common vernacular. Because just about every time we use the word hope, there is always a question mark with it.

There is an element of uncertainty. That is not the biblical hope. Anytime that word is used, it is elpis in the Greek.

And it has to do with a confident assurance. And that is tied with faith. Faith that is a biblical faith is that which leaves room for doubt.

And this is something that a lot of people don't understand because they think that faith means the removal of doubt. And it doesn't mean that at all. It means that there is sufficient evidence that is given to place your confidence in something, but it is intentionally not ironclad.

That means biblical faith. Biblical faith leaves legitimate room for doubt intentionally.

[3 : 37] Because if that were not the case, there would be no place for faith to operate. Faith needs a platform from which to work.

And that platform consists of inconclusive evidence. This is a little more fresh in my mind than it might be otherwise because I just finished with, I think it was volume, well, no, it was connecting with God.

It was connecting with God and I touched on that. And I dealt with a segment called our imperfect faith. Will God accept our imperfect faith?

And the answer, of course, is He has no alternative because that's the only kind of faith we have. None of us has what is called a perfect faith. And as you look back over the biblical characters from the Old Testament to the New, including Abraham and Jacob and David and Job.

And in the New Testament, of course, we've got Peter. And the classic example of a lack of faith is Thomas. All of these expressed faith, but none of them had what we would call a perfect faith.

[4 : 52] So, a perfect faith escapes us simply because we don't have the ability to do anything in a perfect fashion. So, biblical faith is that which recognizes that there is room for doubt.

Let me put it this way. And I think I dealt with this also on the connecting with God. Now, can the existence of God be scientifically proved? The answer, of course, is no.

And His existence cannot be scientifically disproved either. The time is coming when faith will be unnecessary because all that anticipated it, all that it anticipated, will have become a reality.

The same thing is true with hope. So, hope and faith are both going to be put out of business because in the eternal state, all faith and all hope will have been realized and fulfilled.

And like Paul said when he closed out 1 Corinthians 13, now there abides faith, hope, and love.

[6 : 03] And the greatest of these is love. That's the only one that's going to endure because the other two will be out of business. But love is God's coin of the realm and it will endure on into eternity.

And faith and hope will no longer be necessary because everything will have been realized. So, this is exactly the seedbed for what we are talking about here. And having just made those introductory remarks, if you've got something you'd like to add or a question that you want to inject, feel free.

Anybody? Anybody? Okay. Generally speaking, faith is kind of like grace in the sense that most people have a very vague, fuzzy idea of what it is.

For most people out in the world, faith is something that they associate with what shall I say, a hope so kind of thing.

It's kind of like a wish fulfillment. And faith for most people is very vague and uncertain. They usually connect it with something to do with religion.

[7 : 16] And it makes no difference what the religion is. We talk about people having different kinds of faith and etc. And religious faith and so on. But for most people, it's a very vague, fuzzy kind of concept, as is the subject of grace.

I do not know of a single word, unless it is love, that is more important to understand than the term grace. And yet, it completely escapes most people.

And as close as they will ever get to it, is understanding the grace period that is involved in an insurance policy. But it's a whole lot more involved than that. And it's one of those marvelous words that just has no bottom to it.

Dan? I think that, speaking for myself, some people believe in God moments where they, you know, we really talk to God. But I think if you read, do what we're doing here, and the more you study it, your faith is bolstered.

Of course. And I think the faith becomes more and more firm, more and more strong, I guess you might say.

[8 : 24] It is something that we are intended to grow in, just like grace and knowledge. Our faith, that is our confidence. And the word faith means nothing more than belief, trust, commitment.

And it should be on the increase as we mature and develop in Christ. Which means nothing more than our confidence and trust in the Lord should be greater now than it was last year.

Simply because of walking with Him and growing and maturing in the faith, we have logged more experiences and more incidents that God has proved Himself to be faithful.

And that is designed to shore up our confidence in Him. And that is precisely what the Christian life is all about. The greatest thing, the greatest thing that any newborn Christian needs is to grow.

And it is that way physically, and it is that way spiritually. When you grow, you develop strength, ability, and eventually come to the place of where you are able to reproduce.

[9 : 38] And that is, lead someone else to faith in Christ. Joe? Yes. It is just like somebody you know and you get to know them better and you get to know this person pretty soon, you have faith in them that they are going to do what they said they do.

Absolutely. Because they have had experience with it. Absolutely. So the more you are into the Bible, really, and reading the Bible and getting to what God is doing, has done, and so forth, you know more about Him, the more you know about Him, you know He is going to be truthful.

It is true. It is so good to know you can trust. Exactly. And this is precisely why the writer is giving us a whole list of individuals here who in their lifetime demonstrated that God is worthy of being trusted.

You can rely on Him. You can count on Him. And I don't know how many times I have said this at Grace and here over the last 45, 47 years that more than anything else, God wants to be believed.

He wants to be trusted. And a refusal to trust Him, frankly, is an insult. And God does not take insults kindly.

[10 : 48] He wants to be trusted. So faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it, that is, by the principle of faith, the elders, and this is referring to those who have gone before, the elders obtained a good report.

In other words, the 20th century New Testament says, and it was for faith that the men of old were renowned. probably nothing distinguished the biblical characters, especially in the Old Testament, more than their unflagging trust and confidence in the God of heaven.

And nothing pleased God more. This is why we read that verse that without faith, it is impossible to please God. For he who would come to Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

And it is impossible to please God without believing in Him, having confidence in Him. And verse 3 says, Through faith, that is, through believing, we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Now that's quite an interesting statement when you really analyze it. This is talking about creation ex nihilo, and frankly, this is one of the real root problems of our culture today, has to do with origins.

[12 : 26] Because so very much hinges on origins. How, why, and when things began. Because connected, inseparably connected to the idea of origins is the idea of purpose and value and meaning.

Because if you take the evolutionary hypothesis, especially the one that insists there is no need for God, because, as Stephen Hawking said, because of the existence of gravity, the universe was able to create itself, so it did not need a personal creator.

If you take that position, and you bring all things into existence without an intelligent being behind it, then the first thing you have to scrap is meaning.

because there isn't any meaning. I mean, what meaning do you give to a cosmic accident? None.

What value do you assign to it? None. What destiny do you assign to it? None. So right off the bat, if you embrace the evolutionary hypothesis, you're operating without a sense of value or meaning or purpose.

[14 : 01] Don't look for a purpose in life because there is none. And that, of course, leads to the kind of abandonment that many people experience today in the way they live their lives.

They just live like there is no tomorrow because as far as they're concerned, there isn't. And there is no hereafter. There is no heaven. There is no hell. There is no future accounting. There is no judgment.

This is all there is. This is it. So do what you want. Live how you want. Please yourself as much as you want. Gain as much enjoyment from this life at anybody else's expense because this is all there is.

And some people apparently have adopted that philosophy and they live that way. And of course it shows itself in how they treat other people. So, in many respects, this is where we are today.

Someone has said that if you honestly believe that man has evolved from a lower life form and that all he is in reality is animal-like, then how can you really fault him if that's what his behavior reflects?

[15 : 08] If he acts and lives like an animal. We've got some of that going on, don't we? this article that Walter Williams excuse me that Walter Williams wrote in his editorial in today's Springfield paper deals with this very issue and he treats it very, I think, very objectively and in a very common sense way and he points out that the problem is not guns which so many people think today is the problem but the problem is we have lost our sense of morality and dignity in humanity and this is why people are living like they do and this is why we have the mass shootings that we do and so on so the problem the culprit is not the gun it's the people and he makes a very cogent argument for that I dare say that that it will not have much effect upon some of our liberal friends because it just makes too much sense and they can't deal with anything that's that much common sense so that's where we are so the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear this again goes back to the creation ex nihilo excuse me the idea of creating substance or materiality out of nothing is contrasted with the idea of making things and the Hebrew uses two different gatsar and bara

I get them mixed up all the time but one means to create the other means to make and man was both created and made he was made in the sense that thank you he was made in the sense that God used pre-existing material he took the dust of the earth and he made man from the dust of the earth but he was also created in the sense that God breathed into Adam the breath of life which was non-material and Adam became a living soul so one is to make something or fashion something out of pre-existing material which is what we do we don't create anything we can make a lot of things but we have to have material to make it with but God creates something out of nothing and that is just mind boggling it's beyond our ability to comprehend actually it reminds me a little bit of the origin of angels that are created as spirit beings we are told that angels are ministering spirits sent to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation and angels have an immateriality about them they are spirit but they are able to assume human form and when they assume human form apparently they cannot be distinguished from an ordinary human being we saw that in genesis 19 and times past when these three strangers appear to abraham in genesis 19 and abraham is there in the plains of mamre and he sees three men come walking toward him they look like just ordinary men but they are identified one is the angel of jehovah which is a pre-incarnate appearance of christ he is jehovah the other two are angels and they are the two destroying angels who are going to have dinner going to have dinner with abraham and sarah and then they are going on to their mission of destruction to sodom and gomorrah and you read about that in the next chapter but as far as abraham was concerned they were just men they were strangers they sit down and all three of them along with abraham and sarah had a meal together when you come over into the new testament we are told that when the women went to the tomb that christ had already vacated the angel had rolled away the stone and was perched on the top of the stone and they were described as two men and she just thought they were men but they were angels and these angels are able to appear out of nowhere this is why people are always frightened when an angel shows up like zachariah when he was in the temple and he was ministering by providing the incense and all of a sudden there where there was nobody this person appeared just out of nowhere and he was spirit before and he materialized into a human like form and scared zacharias to death and this is the same angel that introduced himself to mary and the magnificat

dave the bible and what you're talking about angels always appear as men where did the angels appear as women also because i'm just looking at that poster over there and there's a woman angel and you see little fake dreams and they always yeah i i i hear you but uh biblically speaking that this this is a you know you kind of opened a can of worms there but this is this is this is well this is this is fascinating fascinating subject you know we've got no time frame nothing we have to cover but um there isn't anywhere in the bible that angels are ever referred to as women now i suspect i don't know this but just indulge me if you will a little bit i suspect that angels are often depicted in art forms as women because and maybe this is a stretch i don't know but women have i think from time immemorial been regarded as the fairer sex and i don't think there's any doubt about that i think any man worth his salt is more than willing to make that acknowledgement that she is the fairer sex and we tend to think and i'm not sure theologically whether this has any merit or not but we tend to think that women in general of course there are always exceptions we tend to think that women in general have a greater sense of purity and decency about them than what we men do and again i want to emphasize of course there are exceptions there are always the jezebels and women like that but most men i think are willing to acknowledge at least i am morally spiritually ethically i married up two times there's no denying that i married up two times i married two women both of whom were better than me in so many ways and i think a lot of men would admit to that you might not admit it to your wife but in your heart of hearts you know there's some truth to that so when we tend to think of women we put them more in the angelic category than we do men maybe that's why artists have gone with so many women and especially with beautiful long golden hair and a pair of wings and have a very angelic look on their face and they are depicted often as women but the bible never pictures them that way joe i don't think i've ever had anybody explain or talk about this or preach about but he made women from the rib of man there must be some significance why he took a rib of man to make woman whether they make her out of dust i don't know i wish i knew more about this but we have more questions than we have answers and actually in the hebrew it doesn't say that he took something from it doesn't say he took a rib it says that he took from the side of the woman but it may well have been a rib and i think that some have just conjectured because it was taken from the side and the point has been made in a lot of wedding ceremonies that he did not take from adam something from the head that she might reign over

him nor did she take nor did god take something from adam's feet that she might be under him but god took something from adam's side that she might be with him and beside him and that she is a full fifty percent of the relationship and it's it's really kind of neat and very significant that the first the first woman was taken from man but thereafter that would forever change and from thereafter woman would be taken from woman and man would be taken from woman as opposed to that first incident so there is something there is something about about eve about woman let me put it this way there is a touch of masculinity in femininity masculinity and there is a touch of femininity and masculinity and there is a cohesiveness there that none of us really understands and as regards angels there is nothing in the bible that indicates that they are sexual beings but this brings up another issue and that is the sons of god and the daughters of ben in genesis chapter 6 and theologians have debated that for a long long time the two views are that and this is probably the oldest view and it is held by most of the hebrew scholars the old testament scholars is that the sons of god are angels and they are referred to definitely as angels in the book of joe and that the daughters of men were human women and that these angels assumed human form including genitalia and had sexual relations with human women and corrupted the entire race and this went on for a period of time so that the only ones that were left uncorrupted was noah and his family and god started over with them that is the view that has been held for thousands of years by most of the

Jewish scholars but there is another view that says that the sons of god was the godly line of Seth the spiritual line and that the daughters of men were immoral women pagan women from that kind of background and they cohabited and produced offspring etc etc but then the issue is muddled further when you read on in Genesis 6 and it talks about there being giants in the land in that day for were they the offspring of this union of this angelic human union I don't know and our Lord in the New Testament when they presented him with what they thought was an unanswerable question about this woman who had seven husbands so in the afterlife which one is going to be her husband because she had seven husbands here they thought they had him stumped and

[28 : 50] Jesus answered and said you do err not knowing the power of God nor of angels but that in the afterlife they are like the angels in that it doesn't say that they that people die and become angels that's a common fallacy too by the way that when somebody dies here they go to heaven they become an angel that's nonsense but Jesus said that angels neither marry nor beget so that kind of leads that out so it kind of puts a murky picture on the whole thing so that we cannot be very definite about it yes Dana go back to the original diversion from scripture man we tend to think of angels as being like you said fairer and kinder and that kind of stuff but the biblical angels that I know tend to be more masculine they're doing you know destroying the city they're they're warriors they're they don't really have feminine traits is that a proper assumption yeah well I think so angels appear to be very action oriented angels are no nonsense beings and when they arrive on the scene it is it is well there are messenger angels like

Gabriel and then there is Michael and Michael is the one who is going to eventually dispatch Satan and he's the one who's going to incarcerate him so Michael is referred to as the archangel and he is the chief angel and protector for the nation of Israel and he has a very specific responsibility as regards that nation and he's going to play a very dramatic role in the end times so what we know about angels you could almost put in a thimble and have space left over they are mysterious beings but they are real beings and they are spirit beings they have apparently an intelligence and a strength that supersedes anything that we can imagine yet at the same time

I get the impression that angels are limited in their understanding and appreciation particularly for the gospel and I don't understand that or how that works because as far as I'm concerned the gospel or the good news is very simple it is so simple that a child can understand it and can partake of that gospel and yet it does seem to escape angels because Peter writes about this and talks about the things that are prophesied the things that are predicted and he says that the angels and others in time past the prophets longed to look into and the meaning that is given there in the Greek is that they just wanted to peel back the page just a little bit and peek into that and see what that was all about but it is hidden from them and they cannot and a case in point is in one of my favorite passages in all of the

Bible is Acts chapter 10 and Cornelius and Cornelius was a Roman centurion he had already come to believe that there was one true God as opposed to many gods that the Romans believed in and he was an army officer who had come to the conviction that the God of Israel was the only true God there was and we are told that he even gave money put his money where his mouth was he gave money to the temple synagogue and that he was praying what was he praying and all we know is an angel appears to Cornelius you can read about this later in Acts chapter 10 and the angel says to Cornelius Cornelius your prayers have been heard now here is what you are to do you are to dispatch some of your men to the city of

Joppa and inquire after a man by the name of Peter you will find him at the house of Simon the Tanner by the sea and you have your men escort him back here to Caesarea where you are and Peter will tell you what you need to know well why didn't the angel tell him in the first place when he said your prayers have been answered that indicates to me that what Cornelius must have been praying for was information light understanding he had already come to the conviction that the God of Israel was the only true God there was but he wanted to know more and needed to know more and I don't know why if the angel knew why the angel just didn't tell him say what you need to know is and go on and explain it to him but he didn't do that it's almost as if he didn't have the ability or at least that wasn't his assignment and he said you get you sent for

[34 : 55] Peter when Peter comes he'll tell you what you need to know the angel disappeared and you know the story Peter gets there after accompanying him with the Roman soldiers and some of his own friends and Peter is dumbfounded as to what's going on that God is revealing himself to these Gentiles so there's an illustration of angels being devoid of information and yet as you read in the book of Daniel Daniel explains some pretty heavy things I mean the angel explains some pretty heavy things to Daniel so it's kind of a mixed bag yes that's true that's true and God had already been working with Peter with this sheet let down from heaven whereby he was supposed to go with Cornelius so he's coordinating it and putting it all together yes I also have the impression that there's thousands or say millions of angels we are not told how many angels there are it's you know we just don't know but you're right there are only

I guess we would say a limited number of angels that have an apparent role in the affairs of men and it does go all the way back to back to Genesis and we have been learning in our exposition of the revelation we have been learning that there is going to be an enormous increase supernatural activity during the tribulation period and angels both fallen and unfallen are going to have very dramatic roles and very obvious roles going to be a time of supernatural activity like the world has never seen during that time and it will involve a lot of demonism and a lot of angelic activity as well okay anything else I'm sorry well legions legions is yeah legions is simply a word that means almost like an unlimited number and when the

Lord confronted this one demon he asked him his name and he said my name is legion for we are many and that's an indication there that there is a considerable number but we cannot put a definite number on it what do you got there William's on it do you want to read it oh well it's a little too long to read but I'll make copies of it and bring it next week so that they can distribute hey guys appreciate your input and thanks for being with us this morning enjoy your breakfast and the day thank you thank you yo thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you you thank you your and thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you