**Koinonia – 23 February 2020**

**The Hall of Faith: The Call to Keep the Faith...!**

***The NATURE and EXPRESSION of FAITH...***

Heb 11:1-7

**Introductory Thoughts:**

• I want to invite you to open your Bibles to Heb 11 as we start a series tonight on Heb 11 that I would like to call: ***The Hall of Faith: The Call to Keep the Faith...!***

• The **ONE** **THING** that should be **MORE PRECIOUS** to a Christian than anything this world can give, is his **FAITH**...!

• Your **FAITH** in **JESUS CHRIST** is the most **IMPORTANT** **THING** about you and is the most **PRECIOUS** **POSSESSION** that you have!

• The **BIBLE** sees your faith as **MORE** **PRECIOUS** than **GOLD**... (cf. 1 Pet 1:6-7)

• It is **BY** **FAITH** that we are saved... it is **FAITH** that connects us with **JESUS**.

• Just think of Joh 3:16-18 & 36... the **FUNDAMENTAL** **DIFFERENCE** between a **BELIEVER** and **UNBELIEVER** is exactly that – whether they **BELIEVE** in **JESUS** or **NOT**... whether they have **FAITH** or **NOT**...

• But we further need to understand that **FAITH** is not only necessary when we **BEGIN** the Christian life, but **FAITH** is necessary for our **DAILY** Christian life.

• If we think of Rom 1:17 that also quotes Hab 2:4 – we are to **LIVE** by faith... the **WHOLE** **CHRISTIAN** experience is **BUILD** **ON** and **LIVED BY FAITH**...!

• **FAITH** is **NEVER** **MEANT** to be a **ONE-TIME EXPERIENCE**, but rather we need to remember what 2 Cor 5:7 says...

• A **TRUE BELIEVER** is in **POSESSION** of a **FAITH** that will **ENDURE** and will therefore **PRESERVE** **HIS SOUL**...

• In Heb 11 we find that this is exactly the **CONCERN** and **FOCUS** of the Hebrews writer... in this chapter he will help us to **MEDITATE** upon the **TYPE** of faith that is **TRUE SAVING FAITH**...

• Saving faith is **NEVER** a **ONE-TIME EVENT** but is rather a **LIFESTYLE** of **TRUST** in the Lord.

• One of **THE** characteristics of **SAVING** **FAITH** is the it **WILL** **ENDURE** till the end...

• As a matter of fact, Heb 11 flows from a **WARNING** that the writer gave in Heb 10:35-39...

• Heb 11 is the **CALL** to **KEEP** the faith... to **ENDURE** and **PERSEVERE** and to so **PRESERVE** your soul...

• It is **FILLED** with wonderful **EXAMPLES** and **ILLUSTRATIONS** of **MEN** and **WOMEN** who had **SAVING** **FAITH** and who **ENDURED** and **PERSEVERED** till the end, despite their **CIRCUMSTANCES** and the **HINDRANCES**, **OBSTACLES** and **PERSECUTION** that they had to face...

• Lets read Heb 11:1-7...

**Teaching Points:**

• We will look at these opening verses under **TWO MAIN HEADINGS**:

**1. The NATURE of Faith... (v1-2, 6)**

• Verse 1 helps us to **UNDERSTAND** what **FAITH** **PROVIDES** us with... it **DESCRIBES** and **EXPLAINS** to us what the **ROLE** and **FUNCTION** of **FAITH** is to be in our lives...

***1.1 Faith functions as our GAURANTEE for what we HOPE for...***

• Faith is **HOLDING** **ON** to that what we **HOPE** for, based on God’s **PROMISES**, and it then **FUNCTIONS** as the **ABSOLUTE** **ASSURANCE** or the **GUARANTEE** that we will receive what we **HOPE** for...the word **ASSURANCE** here refers to a “**title deed to a house**” and so **FAITH** is seen as the **TITLE** **DEED** to the things that we hope for based on what God has **PROMISED**... faith is the **INSTRUMENT** by which you are **ASSURED** that you will **RECEIVE** what God has promised you in His **WORD**...!

***1.2 Faith is where BELIEVING becomes SEEING...***

• Faith further functions in helping your **SEE** the **UNSEEN** in such a way that you are **CONVINCED**, that you are **CONVICTED**, that you **ALREADY** **HAVE** the things that are **UNSEEN** and yet to **COME**... Faith **LARGELY** has to do with the things that are **UNSEEN** now but are **REAL** and will **ONE DAY** be **VISIBLE**... the **NATURE** of faith is that of 2 Cor 5:7... it is where **BELIEVING** **IS SEEING**... Faith teaches us that there are **REALITIES** for which we have **NO MATERIAL EVIDENCE** but that doesn’t make them any less real...!

• Verse 2 helps us to see what is the **RESULT** of faith...

***1.3 Faith brings about ACCEPTANCE with God...***

• The “**people of old**” refers to the Old Testament saints.

• This is an important verse to realise that the Old Testament Saints where **RECEIVED** and **MADE RIGH**T with God in the same way that **WE** are – **BY FAITH!**

• They **BELIEVED** and **TRUSTED** God and that resulted in Him “**commending**” them – giving the **WITNESS** that He has **ACCEPTED** them – that they are **RIGHTEOUS** before Him and that He is **PLEASED** with them...

• The Hebrews writer will then **LIST** a whole crowd of these “**people of old**” as part of the **EVIDENCE** of verse 2 namely that God gives **WITNESS** to their lives and that He has **ACCEPTED** them and is **PLEASED** with their **FAITH** and the way they **LIVED** **OUT** their faith...

• Verse 6 helps us to understand what is the **CONTENT** of our faith...

• We do not have **FAITH** in **FAITH**... faith is only as **STRONG** and **CERTAIN** as the **OBJECT** or the **SUBSTANCE** of what you are **TRUSTING** in...

• Faith is concerned with **REALITY** – that what is **TRUE** and **STEADFAST** and **UNCHANGING**...

***1.4 Faith BELIEVES in the PERSON of God...***

• In **CREATION**, in the **BIBLE** and through **JESUS**, God **REVEALS** Himself for **WHO HE IS**...

• **FAITH** is then **BELIEVING** that **GOD** **IS** who He says He is... that he is **REAL** and that He is **EVERYTHING** that He reveals Himself to be.

• Implied in this is to take God **AS HE IS** and not **TRYING** to make Him into who we want Him to be.

***1.5 Faith TRUSTS in the PROMISES of God...***

• Faith is to take God **AT HIS WORD** namely that He will **REWARD** those who seek Him.

• Jer 29:13; Matt 7:7-8; 6:33

• Faith is to **TRUST** God for what He says – that He will **SURELY** **DO** it.

• ***It is IMPORTANT to understand that FAITH does NOT create reality... faith merely RESPONDS to reality... Something exists or something will happen, therefore we believe it exists and will happen.***

• **THIS** is then the kind of **FAITH** and the kind of **PEOPLE** that God is **PLEASED** with – those who take Him for **WHO** He is and **BANKS** on what He has **SAID** – **THEY PLEASE HIM**...!

• It is **IMPOSSIBLE** without this kind of faith to **PLEASE** **HIM**!

• Those who do not believe that He exist and rewards those who seek Him, will not and cannot draw **NEAR** to Him...!It is **IMPOSSIBLE** without **FAITH** to **KNOW** God and to have a **RELATIONSHIP** with Him!

• **FAITH** in the **PERSON** and **PROMISES** of God is given as the **CONDITION** that **MUST** be present **IF** whoever would want to **DRAW** **NEAR** to God...!

**2. The EXPRESSION of Faith... (v3-5, 7)**

• In these verses we then find **FOUR** **EXPRESSIONS** of **FAITH**:

***2.1 Faith expressed in the WORD of God... (v3)***

• Verse 3 starts with the most basic expression of faith without which we cannot **UNDERSTAND** or **MAKE** **SENSE** of the **UNIVERSE**.

• It is the expression of **FAITH** in **BELIEVING** that **GOD** is the **CREATOR** of everything.

• He is the **ONE** who **DESIGNED** it all!

• The **WHOLE UNIVERSE SCREAMS OUT** that there is a **DESIGNER**.

• We believe that He made **EVERYTHING** by **COMMANDING** it into being... **SPEAKING** it into being...

• We believe He made **EVERYTHING** out of **NOTHING**... He didn’t have **ANYTHING** to work with... there was **NOTHING** and out of **NOTHING** He made **EVERYTHING**...

• ***Q: How do we come to UNDERSTAND this...?***

• Through His **REVELATION**...

• **GENERAL** revelation in **CREATION** **ITSELF** which to any **CLEAR** thinking person without an atheistic agenda, clearly makes know that there **IS** a **CREATOR**...

• But more specifically then also **SPECIAL** revelation – it if because of Gen 1 that we know God **SPOKE** everything into being from **NOTHING**...!

• There is **NO WAY** to **PROOF** that... we **BELIEVE** it because **GOD SAID IT**...!

***2.2 Faith expressed in the WORSHIP of God... (v4)***

• Verse 4 deals with the account of Cain an Abel that we read of in Gen 4...

• It simply states that there was a day that both brothers brought an **OFFERING** to the Lord... we assume from this that there was some sort of revelation from God about bringing **OFFERINGS**...

• Gen 4:4-5 then simply says that the Lord had **REGARD** for Abel’s offering but not for Cain’s offering... the Gen account give sus **NO** further information as to **WHY** this was so...

• There has been **MANY** speculations, mostly about the **OFFERINGS** themselves...

• Heb 11:4 makes it **CLEAR** that it was **NOT** about the **OFFERINGS** themselves, but rather about the **MAN** who brought the offering... and even more specific – the **HEART** of the man...!

• Abel brough his offering **BY FAITH**... **THAT** was the difference between the two brothers...

• It was a **HEART** issue...

• **PLEASE NOTE:** ***WORSHIP expressed WITHOUT FAITH is NOT acceptable before God...!***

• God **REWARDED** Abel - he was commended as **RIGHTEOUS**... God **ACCEPTED** Abel based on his **FAITH** that he expressed in his worship...!

• And his **FAITH** resulted in him leaving a **LASTING** **LEGACY**... **THAT** is the kind of **LEGACY** that we must desire to **LEAVE** one day...!

***2.3 Faith expressed in WALKING with God... (v5)***

• Verse 5 relates the story of **ONE** of only **TWO MEN** who **NEVER DIED...** **ELIJAH** and **ENOCH**...

• In Gen 5:21-24 we read his whole life story...

• At the age of 65, he had a son called Methuselah, which can be translated “**his death will bring it**”... this may refer to the **JUDGEMENT** of God in the **FLOOD**... according to the chronology of Gen 15, it may very likely be that the flood came in the year that Methuselah died...

• What we know for **SURE** is that for 65 years, Enoch did **NOT** walk with God, but that when his son was born, he started **WALKING** with God and **PLEASING** him...

• For 300 years the only testimony given about Enoch is that he **WALKED** with God... **HE** **SIMPLY** **LIVED** **IN** **FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD**, and this **PLEASED** the Lord so much, that He just **TOOK** him...

• Gen 5:24...

• Again Heb 11:6 gives us the **TESTIMONY** regarding Enoch... it was his **FAITH** that made him pleasing to God...!

• God **REWARDED** Enoch – He was **LIBERATED** from the **EXPERIENCE** and **PAIN** of **DEATH**...!

***2.4 Faith expressed in WORKING for God... (v7)***

• Verse 7 relates to us the **COMMENDATION** of **NOAH**, but more so the **CONDEMNATION** of the **WORLD** through his **REVERENT** and **FEARFUL** **OBEDIENCE** to **GOD** that **FLOWED** from his **FAITH**...!

• **NOTE THIS:** ***For those who have FAITH their is COMMENDATION from God... for those with NO FAITH, there is only CONDEMNATION from God...!***

• Noah simply **BELIEVED** God that He will send a **FLOOD**... he had **NO EVIDENCE BUT** that **GOD** said so... (cf. Heb 11:1...)

• History has it that for 120 years Noah **BUILD** the ark... for 120 years he simply **ACTED** and **WORKED** **BY** **FAITH**...!

• This in die midst of **OBVIOUSLY** **GREAT** **HOSTILITY** and **NAME** **CALLING** and **INSULTS**!

• And you thought **YOU** had a difficult **WORK** **ENVIRONMENT** where you had to endure it for the last 10 or 20 years...! **TRYING** to be **SALT** and **LIGHT** and being **FRUSTRATED** with all of these **NON** **BELIEVERS**...!

• And what was Noah’s **SUCCESS** rate...? After **WORKING** and **PREACHING** 120 years **BY** **FAITH**, only **EIGHT** **PEOPLE** were saved... only **EIGHT** people got on the **ARK**... his **HOUSEHOLD**...

• God **REWARDED** Noah – he **AND** **HIS** **FAMILY** was preserved from the **JUDGEMENT** of **GOD**...!

• And just on a side note – it wasn’t **JUST** the eight people that were saved... through Noah would come **EVERY** **ONE** of us...! If it wasn’t for **NOAH’S** **FAITH** being expressed in **WORKING** for God, there would be no **YOU** and **ME**...!

• **ONE MAN MADE A DIFFERENCE**...!

• **THIS** is then what should be the **NATURE** of our faith al well as how we should **EXPRESS** our faith...

• We should **ENDURE** in our faith... we should **KEEP** the faith...

• Abel payed with his **LIFE** for his **WORSHIP** of God...

• Enoch persevered for 300 years in **WALKING** with God...

• Noah **WORKED** by faith for God for 120 years...

• ***Why...?***

• Heb 11:1 – they had the **GUARANTEE** that something better was coming and they were **CONVINCED** of it, even though they hadn’t **SEEN** it yet...

• They have **TASTED** and have **SEEN** in this life that the **LORD** is **GOOD**, and they were longing for the **FULL** **MEAL**...

**Closing Thoughts:**

• Scott Grant: ***“In Psalm 34:8, David says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." He compares the Lord to a good meal. The first bite is a good sign that the entire meal will be delicious. People with faith have tasted of the Lord, and they have seen that he is good. Having seen that he is good, they want the whole meal, so to speak. They want all of the Lord. Although they taste the Lord now, they know that the entire meal is yet to be served, and they await a heavenly feast. The fact that they have tasted of the Lord proves that there is more to come, just like an appetizer is the advertisement for more to come. So they live their lives on this earth based on that future reality.”***

• That is **EXACTLY** what we as **BELIEVERS** are doing in this life – we are merely **TASTING** of **GOD** and **HIS** **GOODNESS**... this life is but the **STARTER**...!

• The **MAIN COURSE** is **YET** to come, let alone the **DESSERT**...!

• Heb 11:1