

THE HALL OF FAITH (PT1)

Hebrews 11:1-7

Introduction: “Gotta have faith”

I. The Definition of Faith

- A. It's Essence: Faith is a strong conviction
 - o “assurance” (ὑπόστασις) and “conviction” (ἐλεγχος) speak of what we are certain about
 - Faith is not a feeling, experience, or a positive attitude toward life
 - Faith is not just intellectual assent
 - It is a deep, personal trust that God's Word is true
 - o Our culture despises people that have certainty in their religious beliefs. Why do you think that's the case?
 - o Does this mean we never struggle with doubts?
- B. It's Object: Faith focuses on what you can't see
 - o What we can't see in the past: Creation
 - “By faith we understand that the universe was created” (v.3)
 - We were not there to witness creation; thus we receive it by faith.
 - Does this mean our faith is “blind” or groundless?
 - o What we can't see in the future: New Creation
 - Our faith is in “things hoped for” (v.1)—likely a reference to heaven or the return of Christ
 - “Hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Rom 8:24-25)
 - Our future hope is grounded in our beliefs about Christ's first coming
- C. Its Importance: Faith is the only way we can please God
 - o Faith is how “the people of old received their commendation” (v.2)
 - o “Without faith it is impossible to please him” (v.6)



- o God's favor is always by faith, not by works. This is not the "hall of works"!

****Key point:** Faith is the opposite of apostasy; it is the cure for our wandering hearts!

II. Lessons about Faith

A. Abel: Faith is Christ-centered (relying on his sacrifice not our works)

- o Why did God reject Cain's offering, but accepted Abel's? Because Abel offered a blood sacrifice, as a symbol that his sin must be paid for. Cain only offered grain.
- o This is the theme of Hebrews! "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb 9:22)
- o ****Key point:** True faith approaches God on his terms, not ours. Self-righteous good works are not how we approach God. We approach God by confessing our sin and need for grace.
- o Abel was the first martyr—he shows us the cost of faith!

B. Enoch: Faith is relational (focused on walking with God)

- o What did Enoch do to "please" God? We are told he "walked with God" (Gen 5:22)
- o V. 6 is likely about what Enoch did: he "would draw near to God" believing that he "rewards those who seek him"
- o ****Key point:** Faith is always directed toward a personal relationship with God

C. Noah: Faith is obedient (following God even when things don't make sense)

- o God asked Noah to do the impossible—build an enormous ark in the middle of dry land!
 - 510 ft long, 50 ft high; took years to build, with incredible expense
 - Noah embodies the idea that faith is focused on what is "unseen"
 - Are we willing to believe God even when it doesn't make sense to us?
- o Key point: True faith always leads to obedience—when you have one you have the other

****These three types of faith reflect the order of the Christian life:** We first trust in the sacrifice of Christ, we then walk with him intimately, and that leads to great acts of obedience.



Discussion Groups

1. Did you have any misconceptions or misunderstandings of faith before this study? How does this passage help clarify what faith really is?

2. Why do you think we are always tempted to make good works the grounds for our relationship with God rather than faith? Why is a works-based religion so much more exhausting?

3. Which of the three lessons about faith (Abel, Enoch, Noah) do you need to hear the most today? How does that lesson encourage and challenge you?

