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We're All in This Together

Hebrews 11 (selected verses)

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Good morning. My name is Pastor David Pranga. I am the Executive Pastor, here at Brewster Baptist Church. It is a joy to welcome you, whether you are here in person or joining us online. Thank you for being with us today.

I love sports. I enjoy all different types of sports. I have been able to visit a number of Halls of Fame over the years, including Baseball, Football, Basketball, and Tennis. Of course, my favorite is the Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame – my favorite sports team.

Every Hall of Fame tells amazing stories. They have thousands of pictures on display, of famous athletes and team accomplishments. Every display tells a story of someone who left a legacy. No matter what Hall of Fame you go to, you simply cannot stop and read every plaque, every story, or watch every video they have on display. It would take way too much time.

Today, we continue in our series in the book of Hebrews, with chapter 11 – which is often referred to as God's Hall of Fame of Faith. But, unlike a sports hall of fame, these people aren't remembered because they were the strongest, smartest, or most talented people.

In God's Hall of Faith, we see men and women whose faith changed history. They were not perfect, by any means. They made countless mistakes. Yet, these men and women lived out their faith in miraculous ways. These stories are told to encourage us to remember that God is trustworthy!

Last week, Pastor Doug kicked-off *Hebrews 11* by talking about what faith is. Faith is defined as ***“The assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen.”*** Pastor Doug went on to talk about how our faith is an inward response to the trustworthiness of God, and that our faith should lead to outward action. It should move us to be people who take action and believe in God's promises. God does not want us to keep our faith to ourselves, or hidden so no one can see it. God wants us to demonstrate our faith, and put it into action every day.

Hebrews 11 is overflowing with examples of people who lived by faith and trusted God. They were people of action, who demonstrated their faith. Last week, Pastor Doug talked about Abel, Enoch, and Noah.

Today, as we study this passage together, the question we need to ask ourselves is this: **What kind of faith does God commend?** The first person I want to mention is Abraham.

Abraham – Faith Trusts God’s Promises (*Hebrews 11:17-19*)

God told Abraham that he would make him a father to all the nations. Abraham had waited 25 years for God to fulfill His promise of a son – at the age of 99. Isaac was not simply the child Abraham loved; Isaac was the child through whom God had promised to build a great nation. Everything God had promised seemed to rest on Isaac.

Then God asked Abraham to do the unimaginable. God said, “Take your son, whom you love, and sacrifice him.” Humanly speaking, the command made no sense. It seems to contradict the very promise God had made. Listen to what Hebrews says.

“By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’ Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death” (*Hebrews 11:17-19*). God asked Abraham to give back Isaac as a sacrifice.

Abraham had extreme faith in God. Abraham did not know how God was going to keep His promise. Hebrews tells us that Abraham reasoned that God could even raise Isaac from the dead, if necessary. Abraham trusted God’s character more than his own understanding. Abraham had no idea how God was going to keep his promise, but Abraham trusted God’s promise.

That is what faith looks like. Faith does not require having all the answers before we take the first step. Faith chooses to trust God before having all the answers. Many times, faith requires us to take one small step at a time.

How many of us have walked through seasons that did not make sense? We pray for healing for weeks and months, but sickness remains. We pray for direction in our life, but the path is still unclear. We pray for our children to come back to Him, but we

do not see any change, after decades. Many of us pray for God to act in countless situations, but God can seem silent.

Like Abraham, we are called to trust God's promises before we understand God's plan. We may not always know what God is doing, but we can always know who God is. God's character never changes. God keeps his promises. God wants the very best for all of us.

Moses – Faith Chooses Eternal Rewards (*Hebrews 11:24-26*)

Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace. He had wealth, influence, education, security, and a future most people could only dream about. If Moses had stayed in Egypt with Pharaoh, life would have been good. Moses could have had everything the world could offer. Hebrews tells us that Moses made a different choice. Let me read the verses from Hebrews.

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward” (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Moses understood something many people fail to discover. Everything Egypt was offering was only temporary. It may have seemed good at the time, but it would eventually fade away. Things won't bring lasting joy and happiness. Earthly things cannot satisfy our souls.

Moses longed to do what was right by God. Moses knew God's promises were eternal and worth following. See, following God is way more important than building your own earthly kingdom. Moses chose to put his faith and his energy towards God's kingdom – things that are eternal.

Every day, we face choices. Will we live for today or will we live for eternity? The world tells us to chase after success, wealth, and status. We are told a dangerous lie. Accumulating more and more stuff will never bring us long-term happiness. Temporary things will only satisfy our heart for a time or season.

When choices come our way, we may need to ask ourselves, are we living for ourselves or are we living for the kingdom of God? Moses answered that question by

showing faith and trusting in and following God – even though it involved suffering, and times of fear and frustration later on.

Moses reminds us that the greatest reward is never found in Egypt or in things the world finds satisfying. It is only found in following Jesus and keeping our eyes focused on Him.

Abraham teaches us that faith trusts God’s promises. Moses shows us that faith chooses eternal rewards. Now, we are about to meet someone whose faith looked completely different. Her name is Rahab.

Rahab – Faith Takes Courageous Risks (*Hebrews 11:31*)

When you read the Hall of Fame of Faith, God puts Rahab on the Faith list. Rahab broke every stereotype possible. She was not respected in her own country. She was a woman. She had a sinful past. She was looked down upon by everyone. She worked as a prostitute.

Rahab was living in the pagan city of Jericho. She had heard what God had done with Pharaoh, at the Red Sea, and to Israel’s enemies. Rahab believed. She believed in the one true God. That belief in God led her to act.

It was through her actions that she took a big-time risk. Instead of obeying the king, she turned her faith to God. She hid the Israelite spies, misled the king’s soldiers, and helped the spies escape. In doing so, she risked everything. She was courageous. If she had been discovered, she would have been executed for treason. Rahab chose to trust God’s promise over the security of her own city. Rahab’s faith was not just something she believed; it was something she was willing to stake her life on. That is why *Hebrews 11* remembers Rahab with great faith.

“By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient” (Hebrews 11:31).

Rahab reminds us of three incredible truths.

1. Faith is available to everyone. Rahab was one of the lowest people in society. Yet, God still saw her as valuable.
2. No person’s past is too broken. All through the Bible, God uses broken people.

3. No person is beyond God's reach. Rahab reminds us that God is not looking for perfect people. He is looking for people who put their faith into action.

Rahab's story also reminds us that faith requires risk. Most of us won't face life or death choices, like Rahab did. We are still called to trust God, even when obedience is costly.

I know this is not the same magnitude as Rahab. Sometimes, sharing our faith with a coworker or neighbor involves taking a risk. We can risk the friendship or risk being labeled in a negative way.

Have you ever been with friends from work, or out in the community, and everyone believes one way, but your faith tells you something else? Do you speak up and share what you believe? It's risky to share your faith with others, or to say "no" to things everyone else is doing. Faith always involves leaving our comfort zone. Faith requires us to trust in God, who can see what we cannot see. God often wants us to move beyond our comfort zone and be people of action. Like Rahab, we discover that God honors those who are willing to trust Him enough to take the next step of faith.

Abraham teaches us that faith "trusts God's promises." Moses teaches us that faith "chooses eternal rewards." Rahab teaches us that faith "takes courageous risks." Three different lives, but one unwavering faith in a faithful God.

If Hebrews ended here, we might think this chapter is simply about great heroes. But it does not end here. It also mentions people who had great faith, but they also endured great sufferings.

The Faithful – Faith Endures Suffering

"There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword" (Hebrews 11:35b-37a).

In verse 35, the tone changes in this chapter. Suddenly, we meet believers who were imprisoned, tortured, mocked, flogged, stoned, and put to death. They did not receive miraculous deliverance; God chose not to step in. Instead, they remained faithful

through their suffering. The writer reminds us that faith is not measured by earthly success or comfortable circumstances.

Sometimes, faith is trusting God for victory. Other times, faith is trusting God in the midst of suffering. In both cases, faith believes God is still worthy of our trust, that God is at work in the midst of what we are going through.

Some of you came today carrying grief. Others have received difficult medical news. Some of you are enduring physical trauma. Others have been dealing with long-time suffering. We often assume that if we have enough faith, life will be easier. Hebrews reminds us that faith is not measured by how easy our life can be. Faith is measured by whether we continue trusting in God.

Some believers experience victories while walking through the deep valleys of pain, which may involve suffering, and sometimes, death. They are commended for their faith, as they remain faithful to God. Our calling is not to choose our circumstances, but to trust God in whatever circumstance God allows in our life. Now we move on to the climax of the chapter.

Our Faith Continues God's Story

“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39-40).

Every one of these heroes was highlighted by God because of their faith. Today, we learned about Abraham, Moses, Rahab, and those Christians who endured suffering. They were all commended for their faith. However, the scripture says, “Yet none of them received what had been promised.” They were all looking forward to the coming Messiah, Jesus. Yet, they trusted God – with only a glimpse of his plan.

We know Jesus Christ. We know that Jesus is God's Son. Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected three days later. We have been given the Holy Spirit. We have received blessings that they could only imagine.

God's story did not end with Abraham. It did not end with Moses, or even Rahab. It did not end with the cloud of witnesses who suffered. It did not end with the early church. It has gone on – one generation after another generation, after another

generation, for hundreds and hundreds of years – even through the life of Brewster Baptist Church.

As a church, we are part of something bigger than ourselves. God's story spans generation after generation after generation. We are all in this together! Different generations, different stories, and different circumstances – one thing remains: **One Faithful God**. Every generation has been called to trust God and live out their faith.

God is still writing his story today. We are part of God's story. Abraham's chapter was about trusting God's promises. Moses' chapter was about choosing eternal rewards. Rahab's chapter was about taking courageous risks. The cloud of witnesses was about enduring suffering.

What will your chapter say? What does your faith look like? How did you put your faith into action? When people look back on your life, years from now, what will they say? Now, it's your turn.

What will your chapter say? Will it say that you trusted God's promises? Will it say you valued His kingdom more than earthly treasures? Will it say you stepped out in faith and were obedient? Will it say you remained faithful, even when life was difficult? My prayer is that each of us will have faith that trusts God through the circumstances that God brings our way – no matter what it looks like.

Let us pray...

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Who is someone whose faith has had a significant impact on your life? What made their faith memorable?
2. *Hebrews 11* is often called the “Hall of Faith.” What do the people listed in this chapter have in common, even though their lives were very different?
3. Abraham trusted God even when God’s command did not make sense (v. 17-19). Why is it often hardest to trust God when we don’t understand what He is doing? Is there an area of your life where God is asking you to trust His promises before you understand His plan?
4. Moses gave up power, comfort, and wealth because he believed God’s promises were better (v. 24-26). What “temporary rewards” most compete for our attention and devotion, today?
5. Rahab’s faith moved her to take a courageous risk (v. 31). Why do you think genuine faith almost always requires action and courage? Can you think of a time when you took a risk or took a step of courage in your own faith?
6. Verses 35-38 remind us that some faithful believers experience suffering, rather than miraculous deliverance. How can these verses encourage someone who is walking through hardship, today? What does this teach us about how God measures a successful life?
7. The sermon described four kinds of faith: trusting God’s promises (Abraham); choosing eternal rewards (Moses); taking courageous risks (Rahab); and enduring suffering faithfully. Which of these best describes the season of life you are in right now? Why?
8. Verses 39-40 remind us that we are part of God’s large story. What does your chapter look like? If someone were telling your story years from now, what do you hope they would say about your faith? What is one specific step of faith God may be asking you to take, this week?