

January 6, 2021 | Hall of Flaw

Hebrews 11; 12:1-2 | Flawed But Faithful

What do you think of when you hear the phrase “Hall of Fame”? Maybe you think of the annual induction into the NFL Hall of Fame in Canton, OH, every August. Or, perhaps you think of the halls of fame for things like music, cars, or planes. (*Did you know there is a hall of fame for things like candy, circus, and toys too?*¹) The point is, we love to highlight the best of the best in a field. And, inevitably, when a person is inducted into their respected hall of fame, they are treated as role models. They become pop-icons by which we—mere mortals—can then aspire to greater heights by keeping our eyes on them.

Now, did you know the Bible has its own “Hall of Fame” in Hebrews chapter 11? The author of Hebrews first describes what faith is and then begins to list people throughout the Bible who have shown faith in God: Abel, Abraham, Moses, Rahab, David, and other major and minor figures (some even unnamed) who illustrated faith in God. But the critical difference between a hall of fame in our world, and the Hall of Faith in Scripture, is that where the world glorifies people to such an extreme that they seemingly overlook their faults, the Scriptures often highlight people's flaws to glorify God. And because the Hall of Faith is filled with flawed individuals, you should be asking yourself, “Are these role models we should be looking to, or is there another?”

Famously, Charles Barkley expressed the same kind of sentiment when he said in a Nike commercial in the '90s, “I am not a role model...Parents should be role models...Just because I can dunk a basketball doesn't mean I should raise your kids.” Likewise, just because someone shows up in Hebrews 11 doesn't mean we should do everything they did. That's not to say that Hebrews 11 lists characters of the Bible who never exemplify the faith. This chapter is packed full of such examples. However, what I am saying is that each and every one of these characters was a deeply flawed human being. Their achievements must be interwoven with their failures for the simple reason that the “Hall of Faithers” isn't unique. They just had a special relationship with a very special God. They were sinners in whom God chose to work. And if God could work with such “damaged goods,” maybe He can work with us too.

This six-week series explores the flaws of those listed in Hebrews chapter 11, the “Faith Hall of Fame.” Through examining the lives of people like Sarah, Moses, and David, we’ll see human weakness overwhelmed by God’s faithfulness. Ultimately, as we look at the flaws of those in

¹ Wikipedia contributors, “List of halls and walks of fame,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_halls_and_walks_of_fame&oldid=995345727, [accessed January 6, 2021].

the Hall of Faith, we'll discover that our actual "role model" is not some historical figure who lived long ago, but Jesus Christ who not only lived then but is also alive today. That though we can look to the heroes of faith from time to time, we must always keep our eyes on the Son of God.

READ: Hebrews 11 (ESV)

¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. [The visible world was made by the invisible God.]

⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that

is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. ²⁰ By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²² By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

²⁹ By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

³² And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep

and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— ³⁸of whom the world was not worthy— wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Now, I'd argue that Hebrews chapter 11 shouldn't have stop with verse 40 but carried on into the next two verses of chapter 12. Why? Because those 40 verses were nothing more than simple build-up for the conclusion contained in 12:1-2.

READ: Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

While we are surrounded by “heroes” of the faith, we must model our life after the one and only champion of the faith: Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus had a joy set before Him, which motivated Him to do the things He did. We, too, have a joy that is set before us; His name is Jesus Christ. He is our joy. To both have and strive for Christ means we do not count anything as a loss if it is lost for the cause of Christ.

READ: Philippians 3:7-11 (ESV)

⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, so that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

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Christ is the end-all and be-all of Christianity. A relationship with Him is worthy of every kind of sacrifice.