

Discussion Guide: Hall of Fame of Faith - Part 13

*Let us examine the Scriptures like the Bereans who "received the message with the great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."
Acts 17:11 (NIV)*

September 28, 2003: "Hall of Fame of Faith – Part 13" by Kimber Kauffman, Senior Pastor of College Park Church. Pastor continues his series on the "Hall of Fame of Faith" from Hebrews chapter 11 with today's sermon on Hebrews 11:33-40 and Titus 1:9.

Remember the writer of Hebrews is trying to encourage Jewish believers who are so discouraged that they are about to give up. He keeps saying throughout the book, if you started in faith, you've got to end in faith.

Pastor entitled today's sermon as, "The good and bad side of the life of faith" and stated that this passage makes us run smack dab right into the middle of one of the greatest heresies that's in the American church, that's heard by millions of people every day on TV, radio and in books. And that is the massive health, wealth and faith movement where people have misunderstood faith. They have faith in faith, rather than faith in God.

For the text of Pastor Kimber's sermon, see the excerpts that follow this discussion guide.

Discussion Guide

As you begin your discussion, pray for enlightenment of the Holy Spirit as you read Hebrews 11:33-40 aloud together.

1. Many people of faith have participated in "conquering kingdoms, enforcing justice, and obtaining promises." What are some examples of the good side of living by faith? From Scripture? From history? From your personal lives?
2. Do you know of any modern-day miracles? What makes them miracles? Is your faith based on these in any measure?
3. What were the bad things that resulted from the life of faith of those described in Hebrews? What bad things have come your way in your life of faith and how have you responded them? How should we respond in light of Hebrews 12: 1-13?
4. Have you ever been asked to renounce your faith and/or join in the activities and beliefs of the world? What has been your response? What have been the results.
5. In light of Titus 1:9 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, what should be our role as fellow believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.
6. Pastor pointed out [the ugly side] how faith is being twisted today by those who are in it for financial gain (as described in 1 Timothy 6:3-5). Do you know of anyone who has fallen prey to the health-wealth heresy? Do you have any responsibility to proactively refute heretical teaching? If not, what is the appropriate motivation? If so, what is the appropriate heart attitude and purpose you should have when you do so?

Excerpts from Pastor Kimber's Sermon (from the audio tape)

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In Hebrews 11 we have been talking about all different aspects of faith...things about faith that help us. This passage today makes us run smack dab right into the middle of one of the greatest heresies that's in the American church, that's heard by millions of people every day on TV, radio and in books. It is a massive movement where people have misunderstood faith. They have faith in faith, rather than faith in God.

There are two things about faith in this chapter that will help us. First, remember that the faith that please God, of Hebrews 11, may be imperfect, it may falter, it may be incomplete. But it does not cease to be approved of God. Second, remember that signs, miraculous signs do not help your faith.

Note: Pastor pointed out how easy it is to "abuse the King's English" by speaking of miracles too flippantly. A miracle is something that cannot happen naturally. It defies the natural laws set in place by God and is apparent to those who witness it.

The Bible teaches that when you go to church you there should be messages that teach you, that reproof you, that correct you and train you. In 2 Timothy the word of God should reproof, rebuke, exhort, and there should be great patience in the person teaching. In Titus 1:9 we learn that an elder must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

So what is the job of a pastor-teacher, according to Titus? It is to hold firm to the truth of God's word, encourage the saints and rebuke heretics. The word rebuke means to convict or to refute, generally with the suggestion of shame on the person convicted. Another way of saying it is to reprehend severely, to chide, to admonish, to expose it for what it really is and then make a person feel ashamed that they are following such false doctrines, because it is contrary to what the Bible teaches.

Today's sermon will not be finished until October 12th after the Mission's Conference, so please wait before you draw your final conclusions until my second message on this topic.

Today, remember the writer of Hebrews is trying to encourage Jewish believers who are so discouraged that they are about to give up. He keeps saying throughout the book, if you started in faith, you've got to end in faith.

Today we live in a post-crucifixion day. Everything about our faith is post-crucifixion. He [Jesus] came, he died, he was buried, he rose again, he ascended, he comes back. All through our life we need to be looking back to creation, looking back to his death, looking forward to heaven, looking forward to his coming.

The Good Side of Faith

In Hebrews 11:33-35 the writer now turns to famous events with 9 statements that describe the achievements of faith...the good side of faith. They are arranged in 3 groups of three with a common feature that links them together.

Attainments of Faith (v33a)...By faith they...

- Conquered kingdoms,
- Enforced justice (remember Ester),
- Obtained promises.

Specific kinds of deliverance and endurance (v33b-34a). By faith they...

- Stopped the mouths of lions (remember Samson, Daniel, David)
- Quenched the power of fire (remember Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego),
- Escaped the edge of the sword.

Positive achievements (34b & 35a). By faith they...

- Were made strong out of weakness,
- Became mighty in war,
- Put foreign armies to flight.

In the Jewish tabernacles they display objects that remind them of how it was by faith that they got the victory. We must believe and put our trust in God. Today, we have crosses to remind us of our faith, right now. It all connects to the past and reminds us of the good side of faith.

The Bad Side of Faith

Now for the bad side of faith, here are examples of incredible illustrations and feats of endurance. How brilliant is this writer, who inspired by the Holy Spirit, now presents the bad side of faith to the discouraged people (Jewish Christians) who were about to give up because of persecution and trouble. They trusted in Jesus and now their lives are not going well. So the writer closes this chapter by listing all those who suffered because of their faith.

- Women received back their dead,
- Some were tortured and refused to be released,
- They faced mockings, scourgings, chains and imprisonments,
- They were stoned, sawed in two,
- They had nothing, they wore sheepskins, goatskins,
- They were destitute, afflicted, mistreated,
- They lived in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth,
- The world thought of them as losers.

But in v38 the writer states that the world was not worthy. This writer is saying, if you live now to lay up treasures in heaven, if you seek and set your affections on those things which are above, and with a focus on the next life have concern about God's justice, God's name and God's holiness, and God's will being done that you, like the spiritual giants of old, will be willing to suffer all these things, verses giving up on your faith. All they had to do was deny the name of their God of Israel, and they chose to hold fast in the faith. For the moment they pass from this world they are taken to a place that will make it worth it all (heaven).

The Ugly Side of Faith

Now, given all this, what is the heresy of today [the ugly side of faith] that I mentioned at the beginning of this sermon? It is called the word of faith movement. Another name is the health/wealth/prosperity gospel. It's really a faith in faith movement. It's filled with terrible hermeneutics (the interpretation of scriptures by Godly men). The leaders of such movements are not interested in hermeneutics, but in what God tells them today. They emphatically teach that all Christians are to be rich, that all Christians are to be healthy and that Jesus was a multi-millionaire.

One famous pastor in this movement, with a church of 10,000 seats, talks about driving his Rolls Royce with his pink slip in his pocket and looking down on those poor denominational people with their worn out cars and their worn out buildings and homes. The same man was quoted as saying, "I would never listen to a pastor who auditorium held less than mine," that's because then he would have to find someone who has more faith than his.

Another such leader, after coming back from a trip to Ethiopia where he was "temporarily humbled" admitted to the Bible answer man, on the radio, that, "I have to admit that my health and wealth theology does not work here in Ethiopia." In the next week he was surrounded by all his old pals and crones and he recanted on that soon after.

In regards to health, one pastor said in a mega church that for some 20 years that he pastored, "No member in his congregation ever died, because if you are walking in the will of God you will never get a disease. You will never suffer. You should always be bigger and that the best testimony you could possible be is to be dripping with diamonds and dripping with [gold] chains and driving the best cars and pulling up the most fanciest of places."

All I have to say is in regards to this, "is this included here in the book of Hebrews? Does it say that these people lived by faith, and you should see the mansions they built? You should see the chariots they had. You should have seen the cloths that they wore. Oh, it was fantastic. God was so pleased with them, and their going to be bored in heaven because it is now going to be nearly that great." [The answer is a resounding No!!!] This is the false teaching of today in such movements.

All through this chapter in Hebrews we see examples to the contrary. Moses said, I will give up the treasures of Egypt, so I can have treasures in heaven. Look again at v35, some were tortured, refusing to accept release so that they might rise again to a better life.

Oh friends, listen to this carefully. For six years, author and speaker Joyce Landorf has endured an overwhelming and paralyzing kind of pain. The pain in her jaw spreads across her face and head. It's severity often brings on nausea and diarrhea. The medical diagnosis is TMJ. The illness persists despite the efforts of many specialists using all known methods of treatment. In talking about her situation, Landorf describes the physical pain and the feelings of failure and alienation that came as she must cancel engagements, and withdraw from social settings. She also wrestles with God over the reasons behind the physical problems that disrupts her ministry. And yet as Joyce Landorf reflects on all aspects of her suffering, she mentions one source of pain more troubling than her own physical pain. And that is the judgment from fellow Christians. A large and vocal branch of the church it seems holds that it is never God's will for a person to suffer. Following that

dictum, these Christians presume all suffering to be derived from one of two flaws in the afflicted person. One the sufferer is being punished for some sin, or two remains unhealed because they lack faith. Confess you sin, they tell Landorf. You must simply exercise more faith. In truth, says Landorf, their haughty condemnation comes at a time of such vulnerability that it hurts worse than the physical pain itself.

This is what they said to my wife's mother as she died of Lou GeHrig's disease. If you had faith. You must have had some sin in our life.

These people on TV will tell you the same things, and I guarantee that they are hypocrites because when they do get sick, I'm sure they go off on vacation and hide it so no one can see them or else they have to admit that they are living in sin.

There are stores of babies dying because members would not take them to doctors for help. One father finally exposed the group because their 15 month old son died of a disease that could be easily healed. He died from a form of meningitis that have could be treated easily. But because the church said, "No! Just have faith. Don't take him to the doctors." he followed their advise. And finally when he died they said, "This is it. This is great. Bring him to church. He is going to rise again before us." But the boy did not rise again. And on and on we can go with similar stories.

They take verses like "I am the Lord God Almighty. Command ye Me," from Ezekiel the prophet and they say see, "He is the Lord God Almighty. Commend Him." So you command Him. And they say things like this. Don't you ever say, "If it be thy will." The only thing is that the Lord Jesus Christ who is the head of the church said, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." So they contradict the very words of Jesus Christ.

They also call something a miracle when it is not. For instance, there will be cancer gone from a patient after many chemo treatments. [I'm now switching to those, who like myself, believe in God and still seek medical help when needed]. And they would take the belief in God farther because they would go to doctors and get chemo and meds and pray and then they say, "it's a miracle." The only thing is that a thousand other patients in the same area also get over similar diseases and half of them never went to church and prayed at all.

These people also teach that we should not have health insurance. If that's true, than should you buy eye glasses, or should you ever brush your teeth? Why? God will take care of your teeth. Rebuke that decay. (Audience laugh).

Please note that sincerely what I want out of Hebrews 11 for this church is to have the kind of faith that Paul prayed for. Look at the prayers of Paul in the Bible and see how many times he prays for physical things. He doesn't.

Oh, there is so much to say about this. I've laid the foundation for what we are going to say. But let me tell you a couple of things. I believe that all healing comes from God. Most of you that go the doctor don't go to the doctor because you have a disease, you go to the doctor because you are healing. You get this great big red pussy things and you say, "Oh, what's wrong?" You go to the doctor because your healing process brought it to your attention to that.

Now, why is it because with all of America's home videos and funniest animal videos, where is a video of a person with no arm in a miracle service and their arm grows out where everyone can see it. Where is a miracle service of a person, like our friends in 3rd service, who being crippled for years, legs bent, paralyzed, who live constantly with catheters, because they are in their chair the rest of their lives...that's the way it is going to be. Let's give Glory to God. Let's get a video camera and let the person change right before our eyes as we pray. Well, they don't have enough faith, I suppose.

Well friends, that's not it, because remember what we learned from Hebrews, that your faith can falter. It can be weak. But guess what? God will accept even the smallest of faith.

Pastor, are you trying to tell us there is no hope? No, no, no. Just listen to what I have to say. Why isn't their one film of somebody with no eye, getting their eye back? Somebody with no arms or legs and somebody jump out of bed? Why is it always something that you can't see??? How come? You say, well Kim doesn't faith say that you are supposed to accept things in faith and we live by faith not sight? That's exactly right, except when it comes to miracles. Miracles are there for sight. That's the purpose of the miracles. That you can see it. Show me a miracle that Jesus does that everyone doesn't see. Every miracle that Jesus does, everyone sees, and they marvel, and they go wow, look at that!!!

Please remember that all healing comes from God. Secondly, that Jesus and the Apostles healed everybody instantly, with one notable exception of the man who saw ministries (?) walking.

What I want you to see and know is that faith doesn't change everything quickly and make our life perfect, and make us always healthy and wealthy, and our cars are always wonderful, and everything we do is great, and that's the best testimony for God. I just want you to know that that is not a part of faith.

If God in his sovereign ways gives you a boat load of money, give praise to him and be generous with it and be a good Christian and guard yourself because you more than the average person will be attempted to forget about heaven and the next life.

In the 2500 years of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation there are only three short periods where 95% of all miracles take place: when God founds the nation of Israel, when God founds the school of the prophets and when God founds the church. It's like a little kid learning to walk the parents are behind them. As they stagger to take their first steps the parents keep them from falling. So our God, during the beginning of the nation, during the beginning of the Prophets, and during the beginning of the Church, gives a boat load of miracles. Now stop and think how the rest of the Bible reads...like everyday life.

Our God tells us that we are to pray for healing and there are little sprinklings throughout the Bible that show you that God does still in fact heal for some reason we don't understand, but it keeps us leaning on him and trusting in him.

I just plead for realism on this. If somebody has that gift it would be known and they would clean out every hospital. They would clean out every ward of mental patience and ward of ICU and everyplace else you could go. When we come back in two weeks I'm going to show you some other things here that will help you. But I do want to show you just this.

Paul, in talking about false teachers says in 1 Timothy 6:5, between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

Notice that I said there were three periods of miracles. Even in the New Testament, when Christ comes on the scenes, miracles. When the Apostles are on the scenes, miracles. But, guess what. Even by the end of the New Testament period you can start to see that miracles are not everywhere. There was a time when the shadows fell upon people and everybody was healed. There was a time when they passed a handkerchief around and everybody was healed.

But look in the last book of Paul in 2 Timothy where he writes in 4:20 that Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus who was ill in Miletus. As the Apostle period ends miracles begin to fade. In Philippians 2:25-27 we learn that Epaphroditus was ill and almost died. But God has mercy. In 1 Timothy 5:23 Paul tells Timothy to drink a little wine (some medicine) for the sake of his stomach and frequent illnesses. In Galatians, Paul says in 4:13, you know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first. And though my condition was a trial to you, you did no scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God. Even the apostle who once healed, he himself was sick as he preached.

According to the health, wealth and faith gospelers, they would tell you that Paul must be in sin. There is so much more that I will share with you in 2 weeks, but let me say if you are sick or if your family is dying with some disease, I want you to know that you can through everything that you have upon God and if it is God's will for him to be healed, God will say yes and he will be healed. And you need to know that. And if you don't feel like you have enough faith to do it, call for the elders of the church and we regularly anoint with oil and pray and we have seen quite amazing things done by God. And I want you to know that if you are weak and suffering and you don't have nice cloths and you don't have a nice place, please remember that these people in Hebrews 11 died poor destitute with no homes but God commended them.

You need to know that God commends you when you live by faith. It doesn't matter what degrees you have, or how much money you have in the bank. It's your faith that God looks at.

And I also want you to remember that it takes faith like Paul to believe. I trust God so much that even though he makes me weak, and I don't like it because I'm weak and I'm frail and I don't like the situation I'm in, but it's through our weakness that he will make us strong. That His strength will be seen through our weakness.

When people tell you that you are missing out on the treasures of this life, you need to have this kind of faith. No, no friends. You lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. You'll thank me on that day. You make it your goal of faith to lay up treasures in heaven.

Closing Prayer: "Help us our God. Please we don't want to be know it alls and cocky and shun faith. Oh God, no. But we pled for realism. We plea for people that are so white washed Lord with this false teaching that they would come home to Jesus, and would understand his love and his grace is not based on things now, but the blessings of the world to come. Oh God, please, have mercy on America for buying in to this false heresy. Amen. God bless you."