



Sermon-Based Study Guide  
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Good Shepherd Church - January 29, 2012

Sermon Title: Entering the Hall of Fame

Sermon Text: Hebrews 11.32-40

Related Texts: Romans 8.18-39

## I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

Who is one of your favorite professional athletes? Did that person make it to the Hall of Fame for their sport?

## II. Introduction

Living by faith has been the focus of the Hebrews author. With a pastoral desire to encourage and exhort the Hebrew Christians who have begun to grow despondent and weary on their journey of faith in Jesus. As we have seen the author develops the idea of living by faith (faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see) means to be confident in the faithfulness and trustworthiness of God. It means looking ahead to the "better country" to come in the fulfillment of God's promises to those who are faithful. It means to trust and obey Jesus Christ - despite the consequences. As we continue we find the author/pastor urging the readers to follow the example of faithful people who endured severe consequences and entered the "Hall of Fame" of faith.

## III. Study the Text – Hebrews 11.32-40

- 1) Let's break this up into three parts, the first being verses 32-34. The author begins with a list of people - a type of hall of fame of faithful people.
  - a. As you look through these verses, what things do you find that these people did "through faith?"
  - b. Now to be very honest, were these people perfect in their faith and obedience to God?  
Take a look at 2 Samuel 11.1-5 to see one example.
  - c. What does this suggest to you when you feel that your faith is weak? Can God turn your weakness to strength as was done for these hall of famers?
- 2) Now let's look at the first half of verse 35. The background for this is 1 Kings 17.13-24. Elijah the prophet and man of God has been sent to the home of widow in Zarephath

(north of Galilee, on the coast just south of Sidon). She and her son are near death from starvation and she is very despondent and hopeless.

- a. Notice the miraculous provision for her and her son - verses 13-16. In what way did this provide new life for her?
- b. But then, as verses 17-18 describe, her son dies. How, according to verses 19-24, does she receive her son back? Through whose faith did this result?
- c. How does God turn tragedy into blessing in this instance? Does God always bring good out of tragic or evil situations?

3) This might be a good time to read Romans 8.18-39.

- a. How does Paul relate present suffering with the glory that will one day be known?
- b. Does seeing through the eyes of faith to a future glory - a future dwelling in the presence of God, a fully restored earth, a complete and true justice prevailing over all - help you deal with present difficulties in life? How about hardships resulting from faithfully following Jesus Christ?
- c. What help from God is promised in times of suffering?
- d. How does Romans 8.35-39 encourage you, especially when you feel that your faith is very weak or that God seems very distant?

4) Let's go back to Hebrews 11.35(b) - 40. Here's the third part of this passage.

- a. Does it seem right that people who are faithful to God would be subjected to such horrific kinds of inhumane treatment? How are these people examples or role models for the Hebrew Christians (who are despondent and perhaps self-pitying) and for you and me?
- b. What do you think verse 40 means - "so that only together with us would they be made perfect (complete)?" What do the Hebrew Christians have (or who do they have) that the Old Testament Hall of Famers did not?
- c. How does this One make their (the faithful Hall of Famers, the Hebrew Christians, and us) redemption complete?

IV. Apply It – Reflect and Respond

- 1) Reflect on the promise found in Romans 8.37-39. How can this encourage you when you feel that your faith is weak? When God seems distant? When you are despondent and weary?
- 2) Romans 8.22-27 refers to the activity of the Holy Spirit in us - particularly when we are weak, distressed, longing for redemption. Will you allow God's Spirit to come along side and be your strength and help, as described here?
- 3) How does the model of faithful "Hall of Famers" encourage and motivate you to be faithful?

*The faith of those people (listed in Hebrews 11.32-40) shines through all the more brightly when we realize that they carried on throughout their lives without seeing the story come to its proper conclusion. They didn't, in fact, receive the promise because it came true in Jesus the Messiah and in the community formed around him... the fellowship of those who follow Jesus establishes the true beginnings... of the world that God intends to make, the world that is to be, the world in which justice and right will triumph.*

*N. T. Wright*