**FAVORITE PASSAGES OF THE BIBLE**

***Hebrews 11 – The Hall Of Faith***

Canton, Ohio. The Pro Football Hall of Fame. 326 members.
Cooperstown, New York. Major League Baseball Hall of Fame. 232 players.
Springfield, Massachusetts. National Basketball Hall of Fame. 178 players.
Toronto, Canada. Hockey Hall of Fame. 289 players.
Nashville, Tennessee. Country Music Hall of Fame. 142 members.
Cleveland, Ohio. Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. 221 musicians.

Think about it, very few players or musicians, even very, very good ones, ever get elected with Hall of Fame honors. Consider how many tens-of-thousands of players have played football, baseball, basketball or hockey. Think of how many tens-of-thousands of musicians have written or recorded music in just the two genres of Country or Rock & Roll, not to mention all the other genres. And yet only a handful ever make the cut into “Immortality” (i.e. so-called “lasting fame”). It’s virtually impossible to become an elite person in the world of sports, music, art, business, finance, literature and other fields.

That is not true with us in the most important field ever conceived – faith in God. I can make God’s Hall of Fame (i.e. Hall of Faith) and truly become an Immortal in the only realm that matters. That is why one of my favorite passages in the Bible is Hebrews 11.

I know. I know. You are already way ahead of me as you quote, “*By faith the elders… Abel… Enoch… Noah… Abraham… Sarah… Isaac… Jacob… Joseph… Moses… Joshua… Rahab… Gideon… Barak… Samson… Jephtahah… David… Samuel… the prophets*…”

But slow down. Easy does it. Stop running. Start walking. Pause, ponder, profit at each name listed. Research their story. In their story is my story, and yours. These “hall of fame” men and women were just ordinary people. Some might have been “five-talent,” but most were just “two-talent” or “one-talent” folks (Matt. 25:14-30). You don’t have to be among the elite to also hear the Lord say, “*Enter into the joy of the Lord*” (that is our induction ceremony into the Hall of Fame). Ask any of these “greats” and they will tell you what Gideon said, *“O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.”* (Judg. 6:15).

Just look at that list carefully. Abel the shepherd? Rahab the harlot? Hall of Famers? Really? The list of those who will be in the Hall of Heaven are left anonymous. The vast majority we will never know this side of eternity. Please, keep reading:

33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith…”

I believe 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 beautifully describes Hebrews 11 when Paul writes:
*6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For* ***we walk by faith****, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

I love Hebrews 11 because it builds my confidence (“*we are always confident … we are confident, yes, well pleased*…”). If I walk by faith then God will induct me into His Hall of Immortals. Did you notice that this list includes those who “*out of weakness were made strong*?” It included women and men, young and old, known and unknown, who simply found courage to endure by faith when their lives were in danger. They were ordinary people with extraordinary faith – “*of whom the world was not worthy*.”

Every man and woman in this chapter saw themselves as a tourist, you know… “just passin’ through.” We too are patiently biding our time here as we “*wait for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God … having seen them afar off … confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth … they seek for a homeland … they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country*” (vss. 10-16).

In his book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis wrote,

"If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The apostles themselves, … the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in.'"

I love that quote from Lewis, for it so eloquently describes that “*great cloud of witnesses*” (12:1). It drives me to want to join them. It makes me want to wear myself out for the King and the Kingdom.

As I’m getting closer and closer to the end of life’s journey I think more like a transient. I’m thinking more like these pilgrims of faith. I remember reading in John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* that *“once we’ve caught sight of the Celestial City we can never be content with anything less.”* Perhaps if you never read that classic book, you did read J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord Of The Rings*. Frodo and the other Hobbits set out on their great adventure singing, “Home is behind, the world is ahead.” Unlike Frodo, we sing: “The world is behind, home is ahead.”

If your faith is wavering (which it often does in even the best of us – see Job, Elijah, John the Baptist, Peter, etc), open your Bible to Hebrews 11 and don’t just read it, pray over it. In doing so you will, like me, discover “*Faith is the substance of things hoped for*…” (v. 1). You will gain confidence because your faith believes “*God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*” (v. 6). That reward is induction into the Hall of Faith, located not in Canton, Cooperstown, or Cleveland, but among the immortals in Heaven.

Paul once said that two women, Euodia and Syntyche, and a man named Clement, along with some unknown Christians in Philippi, already had their names in the Book of Life (Phil. 4:1-3). Hebrews 11 lets me know my name is also in that Book and if I simply walk by faith I will join them in the only Hall of Fame that matters. Are you with me?

I love you. - Rick