

## Who's In Your Hall of Fame?

Psalm 107:1-9  
Hebrews 11:39-12:3

November 5, 2017  
Faith Community

I have a project for you that you can start on right away. Get your imagination going. Close your eyes if that would help. Picture your 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party. If that's already happened, pick another age; just be sure it's sometime in the future.

Attending your party are the people who've been most important to you over the years: family, friends, teachers, coaches, and hopefully a pastor or two. As you look around the room you realize all over again how blessed you are. Of course on a birthday as momentous as this there'll be speeches and testimonials, people will be dumping love all over you. What'll they say about you and to you, in front of everyone else who's there? What tribute might they give you? Best of all, how will they praise God because they've shared life with you?

Someone asked me to do that a few years ago. Right away I thought of a couple men: my father and my brother. They both died way too soon, Dad at age 47, and my brother Mark at 30. But I pictured both of them at my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party anyway.

And what I imagined them saying to me when their turn came was this: "You kept going when we couldn't. We knew you could do it!" That touched me more than I ever thought it would.

What might the important people in your life say about you and to you? How might they affirm you? How are they doing it now? Think of it another way: how are you cheering on the important people in your life? Just don't wait until you're 80 to do it. Today's Scriptures offer some pointers.

One commentator says, "There is no part of the New Testament of more value than this 11<sup>th</sup> chapter in the book of Hebrews."<sup>1</sup>

I like to think of it as the Old Testament Hall of Fame.

- You'll find workers of wonders there.
- You'll find brave souls who in the Spirit of God met insurmountable odds head on.

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<sup>1</sup>Barnes Notes On the New Testament, commentary on Hebrews 11:40.

- There are those who were on the receiving end of great miracles.
- There are also unnamed people who suffered greatly but did so with a firm and certain grasp of the faith.

You find Noah,  
Sarah,  
Jacob,  
and Joseph.

You find those of noble character like Abraham, and you also find Rahab. She was the prostitute who nevertheless played a key role in the taking of Jericho by the Children of Israel.

You find Moses who courageously led them out of Egypt to begin with, but you also find Moses who lost his own chance to enter the Promised Land when he let his temper get the best of him.

You find nameless people who were filled with the fires of faith and because of it went through ridicule, imprisonment, torture, and desolation.

What does Hebrews say about every one of these people?

***The world was not worthy of them.*** (11:38)

***The world was not worthy of them.***

- Imagine that being said about you.
- Imagine your life counting for something that tremendous.
- Imagine making a difference that impacts eternity.

Spend time yourself in this 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews.

All those people were celebrated for their faith, everyone, even with their sins, shortcomings, and second-guessing.

We're also told they died with unfinished business. Jesus hadn't arrived in the flesh yet. Stay with me here, this is so exciting. This is where we come in.

***God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*** (v. 40)

"Perfect" here means complete. What that says is that we have a part to play. The race is not over yet. The

baton's been passed to us now, and those who've gone on before are watching and cheering. And they need you to finish the race.

Now comes the crescendo: "Therefore," the author writes. I love it when there's a therefore.

**Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea. (Ps.46:2)**

Therefore!

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Co. 5:17)**

Therefore!

**Therefore, since we're surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hb. 12:1)**

You're not alone, friends. Even when you feel like it, you're not alone.

You're running the race Abraham ran, along with Sarah, Moses, and King David. Imagine the likes of them watching and cheering you on. They've passed the baton to you now, and they're watching and hoping.

There's Peter, James and John.  
There's Paul, Barnabas and Lydia.

Along with them, think of the godly people no longer living who personally shaped your life, motivated, inspired, and interceded on your behalf.

There are Amy, Wilhelmina, David, Margaret and Roberta.

Is there a teacher perhaps, a coach, a family member or friend, maybe a godly pastor? That's a great cloud of witnesses, friends. You're not alone. Add to that the people today who love you with a love that'll never die. You're not alone.

Another great lesson of this passage is, you've got a purpose for your life. You have a reason for living. Verses two and three put it this way: in running the race,

***Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him....so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.***

Keep your eyes on the prize. Never lose sight of that finish line.

- When you're on top of the world, look to Jesus.
- When the world's on top of you, look to Jesus.
- When you're the picture of health, look to Jesus.
- When the lab report comes back and it's not good news, look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith.

If you're not running for Jesus, you're running for someone else.

If you don't surround yourself with healthy, godly people, others will come along and drain you dry.

If you don't choose positive values and priorities, if you don't know your finish line, you'll be fair game for whatever smooth talker or fad that comes your way, and so much of it is downright dangerous, and the day will come when you'll wish it had been otherwise.

You're not alone.

You've got a purpose.

Bring all of that with you to the Lord's table.