

The Life of Faith
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FAITH AND WORSHIP

The only life worth living is the life of faith. Faith "gives substance to our hopes and makes us certain of the realities we do not see," Hebrews 11 :1, NEB. Biblical faith is always directional; it is always pointed toward God. Therefore, to say the only life worth living is the life of faith is to say the only life worth living is the life in which God is real.

To live in the reality of God means to live with a spirit of worship. Psalm 95:6-7 issues the call, "*O come, let us worship and bow down: Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, For He is our God: and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of*

His hand." In discussing the life of faith it is necessary to begin at the point of worship.

First, consider the importance of worship

Worship is important to man. He needs it. He needs to worship because he needs God, and worship is the way that he meets God. Worship is the human attempt to restore the lost fellowship with God under which we suffer. Man needs fellowship with God. He needs to restore that fellowship. In worship his heart reaches out after God in various forms that worship takes. Man needs worship. Worship is also important in its God-ward aspect. Not only does man need it, but God deserves it. Therefore, as man comes in his need and offers worship to God, God responds to man.

In I Chronicles 16:29 we are admonished, "*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name. Bring an offering and come before Him. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*" Note that the Lord is due glory being given to His name, He deserves worship. Psalm 29:1-2, "*Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*" Again, you will note the glory is due unto His name. God so deserves worship that even nature itself worships God. "*The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork,*" Psalm 19:1. Worship is important, therefore, because man needs it, and God deserves it.

Secondly, notice the elements of worship.

Hebrews 11:4 reads, "*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of His gifts: and by it He being dead yet speaketh.*"

The first element of worship is sacrifice. Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. The incident is recorded in Genesis 4. There the Scripture recounts, "*Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering,*" 4:3,4. That is the very first worship experience recorded in the Holy Scripture, and the sacrifice was the major part of the worship. True, the brothers brought different kinds of sacrifice, but each of them recognized that when they came before the Lord, they should bring an offering to present to him.

The offering of the fruits of the ground and of the flocks of the pasture was common in Old Testament worship. Deuteronomy 26: 10, "*And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God.*" Again, I Chronicles 16:29 admonishes, "*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name: bring an offering and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*" The

implication seems to be very clear. The bringing of an offering to God is a part of giving Him the glory that is due to His name. Sacrifice is an essential part of worship. The second element of worship is faith. Hebrews 11 :4 reads, "*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.*" It is important for us to realize that when we offer our sacrifices to God, we must offer more than a sacrifice. We must offer ourselves to God by means of the gift. Is God there? Does He really receive what we have to offer? Does it do any good to worship? The affirmation of faith is "yes," for faith makes us certain of the realities we do not see.

Genesis 4:4-5 reports that God had respect unto Abel's offering but had not respect unto Cain's offerings. What was the difference between the offering of Cain and the offering of Abel? Cain ignored the correct ritual in the offering; Abel observed the correct methods of offering. Cain ignored the obligation of a blood offering; Abel observed the presentation of blood offering. Cain offered a lifeless offering; Abel offered a living offering. Cain offered with a sinful character; Abel offered with a righteous character. Cain was concerned with seeking food for the body; Abel was concerned in seeking forgiveness for his spirit. Cain offered a gift to God; Abel offered himself to God through the gift. John 4:24 reads, "*God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*" Psalm 96:9, "*O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Fear before Him all the earth.*" Worship involves sacrifice, faith, and also reverence to come before the presence of the Lord.

The third element of worship is time. The time of worship is indicated in Genesis 4:3 by the phrase, "*In the process of time.*" It suggests there is a set time for worship. In the Ten Commandments God established a seventh day as a proper time for worship in the old economy. Today we worship on the first day of the week. Do you know why Christians worship on the first day of the week? Jesus arose from the dead on that day, Mark 16:1-9. The disciples met to worship on the first day of the week, John 19:26. Pentecost fell on the first day of the week (Leviticus 23:15) and the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, Acts 2. World missionary evangelism began on the first day of the week, Acts 2. Early Christians met to break bread on the first day of the week, Acts 20:7. Offerings to the Lord's work were given by the Christians in their first-day-of-the-week meeting, I Corinthians 16:2. The time of the Christian assembly is always on the first, not the seventh, day of the week. The Lord's Day is the first day of the week.

The influence of worship is reflected in Hebrews 11 :4. The Scripture says of Abel "*he being dead yet speaketh.*" Multitudes of God's people are still speaking of the validity of their faith, even after their death, because of the testimony and example they set in worship. Many people have precious memories of childhood at church. I remember an adult who said to the pastor, "I can remember when I was a child going to church with my parents and having the minister eat dinner in our home. And I want my children to have those same memories."

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after that I may dwell in the

house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple," Psalm 27:4. "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," Psalm 22:1. "For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." The life of faith involves a personal meeting with God through the experience of worship. Join me in worship. Bow down and kneel before the Lord, our Maker. Begin walking that blessed way of the life of faith.

FAITH AND THE DAILY WALK

The man of faith meets God in the great traumatic experiences of life, in the exalted worship sessions, in the periods of prayer, and in the reading of the Word. But the man of faith also meets God in the very ordinary affairs of life. *"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death and was not found because God had translated him. For before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,"* Hebrews 11:5,6. Reference to Enoch carries our minds back to Genesis 5:21-24, *"And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."* From the Biblical record concerning Enoch let us draw some lessons that will teach you and me how to walk with God today.

First, a man can walk with God. God delights in walking with men. We are made in His own image and likeness. He enjoys fellowship with us. Genesis 3 pictures man in the garden of Eden. Verse 8 tells how God would come on occasion to walk in the garden in the cool of the day. There He would meet the man whom He had made and the woman whom He had made to be with him. They would rejoice in their fellowship together. From that time onward, God has walked with those who desired and welcomed His companionship.

Enoch's walk with God was not only in unusual situations. He walked with God over a period of three hundred years indicating that a person can walk with God through all kinds of circumstances in life, youth, middle age, old age, and even to the end of life. Genesis 6:9 reminds us that Enoch's walk with God was not the exception; Noah was a just man, perfect in his generation and Noah walked with God. Neither is the opportunity of walking with God an Old Testament privilege alone. Revelation 3:4 speaks of those who have not defiled their garments, and Jesus said, *"...they shall walk with me in white."* That means you can walk with God.

A second principle is, a man can walk with God in the worst of times

Consider the situation in which Enoch walked with God. The world condition had

grown so serious that shortly after the translation of Enoch came the terrible flood in the days of Noah. Here is the way Genesis 6:5-7 describes that generation, "*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth;'*" In that kind of situation Enoch walked with God. "*I, only I, am left for they have killed all your prophets with a sword,*" (I Kings 19:10) Elijah cried, and yet, Elijah walked with God. Genesis 41:38 tells how Joseph, a young man, stranger in a foreign country, a captive there, walked with God, Daniel 1:8 recounts how Daniel and the three Hebrew children walked with God in the midst of the paganism and idolatry of Babylon. Yes, a person can walk with God in the worst of times. You can walk with God today regardless of your circumstances.

Third, a man who walks with God will please God.

(1) Before Enoch's translation, he had the testimony that he pleased God. He walked with God. (2) "*Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,*" Genesis 6:18. And when the time came for Noah to enter into the ark, God said to him, "*Come into the ark; you and all your household, for you I have seen righteous in this generation,*" Genesis 7:1. (3) Jesus walked with God, and the Scripture recounts how at his baptism the heavens were opened, the Spirit of God descended as a dove, and the voice of the Father spoke from Heaven saying, "*This is my beloved Son.*" Jesus could say, "*I do always those things that please Him,*" (John 8:29) because He walked with God. God desires your fellowship. You will please Him in direct proportion to the quality of your walk with Him.

Fourth, a man who walks with

God will be honored of God. Enoch walked with God and God honored him by translating him that he should not see death. Revelation 3:4 promises that those who walk with God shall have the privilege of being clothed in beautiful and white garments and will overcome in the victory of the Lamb and will sit down with the Father at His throne. Jesus says, "*Blessed are those servants whom when the Lord comes He shall find them watching for the Lord Himself will serve them,*" Luke 12:37. What a blessed way to conclude our earthly walk with God.

Fifth, a man can walk with God only when He walks by faith

God cannot be seen with the human eye. It is faith which makes us certain of the realities we do not see. Hebrews 11 :6 says, "*But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*"

Sixth, a man like you can walk with God in a time like today

By virtue of personal faith in Jesus Christ, you are in Christ. You can testify, *"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me,"* Galatians 2:20. Hebrews 13:5 reads, *"Let your conversation be without covetousness and be content with such things as you have for He hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'"* Consider what that means. Since a person can walk with God in the worst of times, since a person who walks with God will please God, since the person who walks with God will be honored of God, since the person who walks with God must of necessity walk by faith, you can walk with God in the circumstance in which you are living just now, if you have personal faith in Him.

Genesis 5:24 reads, *"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not: for God took him."* Someone imagined Enoch and God were walking together one day. Enoch said, "Lord, it is getting late. I must return home." God said, "We are closer to my home than we are to yours. Why don't you go home with me?" And Enoch did!

When you learn to walk with God by faith, there will be the blessed fellowship of daily communion with Him, plus the blessed prospect of hearing the invitation one day, "Come home with me," and you may. Put your name where the Scripture recounts the instance of Enoch. *"By faith (your name) was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."*

FAITH AND LIFE'S VOCATION

Abraham was one of the greatest men who ever lived, He is mentioned several times in the Old Testament Scriptures as an example of what it means for a man to live by faith in God. He is mentioned by name twenty eight times in the New Testament. He was preeminently a man of faith. Romans 8:16 says that he is the father of all who believe. Galatians 3:7 reads, *"They which are of faith ... are the children of Abraham."* Galatians 3:9 repeats, *"They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."*

What was there about Abraham that marked him as such a man of faith? Hebrews 11:8-10 reads in this manner, *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."*

First, consider the awakening of faith

Abraham did not live in the midst of people who believed in God. He lived in a city known as Ur of the Chaldees. Ur was a pagan city. The moon god, Narmar, was worshipped in Ur along with his female consort, Ningal. The citizens of Ur considered that their god owned all property and to give allegiance to the god was the equivalent of giving allegiance to the state. And yet, in the midst of this pagan, heathen situation, Abraham believed God.

Abraham's faith was based solely upon the Word of God. We are told Abraham was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance. The exact content of that call is recorded in Genesis 12:1-3, "*Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*" Upon the basis of that specific word and promise of God, Abram left Ur, his home, and went away unto a place which was at that time unidentified.

"The whole transaction was in the highest degree an act of simple confidence in God where there was no base of human calculation. And where all the principles upon which men commonly act would have lead him to pursue just the contrary course. "- Albert Barnes.

Abraham went out not knowing whither he went. He had never seen the land of Palestine. Indeed, the land to which he would journey had not even been identified to him at the time he had started his journey. No visitor from that place had ever described it to him. It was a journey of such distance that, once he had made the journey, he would never return to his home land. His faith was awakened by the promise of God which made him certain of realities he could not see.

Second, consider the obedience of faith

By faith Abraham obeyed; and he went out... Hebrews 11:8. You see, faith and obedience are inseparable. Abraham would have never obeyed if he had not taken God at His word; but taking God at His word, it was natural that he should obey. He did not obey on the basis of accomplished fact, but on the basis of expectation of things to come. He did not obey on the promise of a land inheritance, because that promise came much later. Genesis 12 recounts his call and his leaving home, but it is not until chapter 13, 15, and 17 that the land inheritance is mentioned. The promise of an inheritance was a reward to his faith, not an incentive. he went out, not knowing whether he went, Hebrews 11:8.

Consider that journey of faith which Abraham took. It was a long and dangerous journey (more than four hundred miles) with no knowledge of the way. He was going among strangers of a different race, a different culture, and of a different religion. He

was leaving home, country, friends, the place of his birth, the graves of his fathers, to see them no more. He had no right to the country that he went to receive. He could not claim it on the basis of discovery, exploration, inheritance, nor conquest. He had no power, no military force sufficient to take that country. Yet, he went confident of receiving it. He had no means of attaining its possession by purchase or by conquest, but he believed God's promise to give it to him. Doubtlessly, he was viewed as wild and visionary by his friends. The call from the most high God seemed fanatical to them, but he believed God.

Third, consider the persistence of faith.

In spite of unfulfilled promises Abraham kept on believing God. He "*sojourned*," as the Scripture says, in this land. He sojourned as if it were not his home. He had no privilege except that which was open to any other foreigner; which was simply to feed his cattle on unoccupied land, He remained a foreigner, permitted to dwell in the land as an alien by those citizens who actually owned and controlled it. He never owned any of the land during his own lifetime, except for the cave which he purchased for his burial place. He lived as if he had no right to the soil and never expected to possess it. He lived in tents, not in a city with a permanent house. He was never settled in one place. He kept faith for years without seeing God's promises fulfilled. He lived in confident and quiet expectation together with Isaac and Jacob. Three generations of them waited to see God's promise fulfilled and in all this time, he lived with complete confidence in God.

Fourth, consider the goal of faith

Abraham's faith reached beyond his own times. He was looking for a city which hath foundation, a permanent inheritance. His faith was awaiting a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, Hebrews 11: 10. Because God promised to bless all the nations of the earth through him, his faith included Salvation as well as a land inheritance. Jesus said, "*Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad*," John 8:58. Looking forward according to the promise of God, he accepted by faith all those things which God had promised. Faith made him certain of realities he could not see. He became preeminently the man of faith, God has promised you many things you do not see: salvation, a heavenly home, the indwelling of His divine Spirit, His blessed sufficiency, answers to prayer, and so the list could go on. Will you be a person of faith and enjoy those blessings? Remember, "Faith gives substance to our hopes and makes us certain of the realities we do not see." Hebrews 11:1, NEB. It is faith that opens the door and gives God the opportunity to act like God in your personal life. I have heard the concept expressed this way, "Faith is that attitude which lets God be God in action in you." *According to your faith, therefore, be it unto you.*

FAITH AND SPIRITUAL REALITIES

There are two worlds with which we are related. One is material, the other is spiritual. Both of these worlds are very real. The material world is understood by sight, and the exercise of our physical senses. The spiritual world is understood by faith, and the exercise of our spiritual senses. Second Corinthians 4:18 reads "*we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*" In other words, it is the unseen world which is the more lasting and permanent of the two. Faith makes that world real to us. And what is faith? Faith gives substance to our hopes and makes us certain of realities we do not see. Behold the blessed influence of faith. Concerning the patriarchs of the Old Testament it recounts, "*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city,*" Hebrews 11:13-16. There are some things which, if sincerely believed, change the course of life. The patriarchs of the Old Testament, whose confident faith in God directed the course of their lives, teach us the reality of faith.

First, consider the persisting power of faith

"*these all died in faith.*" The particular construction of the Greek language of our New Testament says "These died in the path of faith ... These died according to faith." Since "Faith gives substance to our hopes and makes us certain of realities we do not see," each of the patriarchs died with absolute confidence in that which they had not shared. They believed, they kept believing. They died believing. Even if the promises were not fulfilled, they died with a firm conviction that God would fulfill His promises. Jesus said to Thomas, "*You have seen and you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed,*" John 20:29. Joseph believed without seeing and, upon his death in Egypt said, "*God will surely take you back to the land that He promised to the fathers, and when you go, take my bones with you and bury them in that land.*" Behold the persisting power of faith!

Second, consider the assuring power of faith

"These all died in faith not having received the promises, but being persuaded of them, embraced them and confessed them." They had no doubt about the reality of the fulfillment of the promises of God. It is like reading a book when you already know how it ends. However the hero may be in trouble and whatever problems may plague

him in the development of the story, you already know how it ends. You know he will be victorious at the end. So you read with no worry about the outcome. The pilgrims traveling to the holy city could see the towers of the city on the horizon, point ecstatically to the vision, and shout their acclaim. That is the way it was with the patriarchs. They had believed what God had said was going to be, and they rejoiced in its reality though they had not yet received it.

Third, consider the inheriting power of faith

They embraced that which God had promised. They drew it to themselves. They greeted it, saluted it, welcomed it. With a joyful acceptance they pressed these promises to their hearts. Like children who were choosing toys, they were saying, "This one is mine." Because they believed, they enjoyed in absence the promises God had made.

Fourth, consider the identifying power of faith. They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims. The place of their sojourning was not their home. They were mere residents without the rights of the citizens in the land of Canaan. But more than Canaan is involved here. They were strangers and pilgrims in the earth. No where on earth was truly their home. They had a home awaiting which is much more glorious than any home on earth. That is the reason why they experienced such an assurance of faith.

Fifth, consider the elevating power of faith

If they had desired, they could have returned to the country out of which they had traveled, but they did not desire it. They desire, now, a better country—a heavenly country. The land they had left back in Mesopotamia was not truly home to them. The land in which they lived in Canaan was not truly home to them. They were seeking a fatherland. No earthly fatherland had been found between Mesopotamia and Canaan, and no such fatherland was found in Canaan. So, they waited for God to give them the land. There was no plan for conquest, no claim to title. They looked beyond the temporary object lesson of Canaan to the real inheritance that awaited them in eternity. They were better people for believing.

Sixth, consider the glorious end of faith

God prepared a city for them. He was not ashamed of them. He had said, "Those who honor me, I will honor," I Samuel 2:30. God had prepared for them a city so that, though they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, they had the reality of their inheritance in Heaven.

You can live with absolute assurance of the spiritual realities that wait ahead. How do you live that kind of life of faith? **(1)** Hear the inaudible. The Scripture says, "*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*" and Jesus said, "*He who has an ear, let him hear.*" Tune your heart, not simply to the voices and sounds of the world,

but to the spiritual realities that come from God. (2) See the invisible. You have the capacity to see. Second Corinthians 4:18, Paul says, "We are not looking at things which are seen, but at things which are not seen." This is not self-deception; there is something to be heard in the spirit realm and there is actually something to be seen in the spirit realm. (3) Believe the unbelievable, like Abraham of old, and you can persist as seeing Him who is invisible. (4) Embrace the intangible. Look in on Heaven, and expect God to act exactly as He has promised He would act. Learn to pray, "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.*" (5) Confess the impossible. Act as though the hoped for thing is so, when it is not so, in order that it may become so. When ten lepers came to Jesus and cried for cleansing, Jesus simply shouted to them from the distance, "*Go show yourself to the priests.*" The reason for them to show themselves to the priests was that he may pronounce them clean and restore them to their home. They went. They acted as though the hoped-for thing (the cleansing) was so, even when it was not so, and they suddenly discovered that it was so. Faith is being sure of the things hoped for, being convinced of the things we cannot see. You believe in this way, and you will discover the realities of the things of the spirit.

FAITH AND DIVINE LEADING

What do you do when the leading of God seems to go contrary to the expressed will of God? What do you do when the will of God seems to violate the very nature of God? What do you do when the expressed will of God is contrary to what you understand to be the ultimate purpose of God?

Abraham faced those questions and from that experience teaches us how to respond to the testing of faith. The Scriptures recount that when Abraham was one hundred years old and his wife, Sarah, was ninety years old, Sarah conceived miraculously and bore a son. They named the lad Isaac. He came in specific fulfillment of the promise of God. But when the lad was in teenage, God said to Abraham, "*Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of,*" Genesis 22:2. That command of God, so explicitly stated, seemed to be in direct violation to the promise of God and the purpose of God. Hebrews 11:17-19 recounts, "*By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*"

Abraham was a man of great faith; but the supreme act of his faith was his offering of Isaac to God. It was an act of faith when he left home in Ur. It was an act of faith when he believed God would give him a great posterity. It was an act of faith when he believed God would give a land inheritance to his posterity though he never

received it in his lifetime. It was an act of faith when he believed God would give him a son. But the greatest act of faith was when he gave that son back to God in sacrifice. How could Abraham do it? Very simply, he believed God.

God's demand was a testing of faith. The word in Genesis 22:1 is "God did tempt Abraham." That word does not mean "tempt" in the sense of entice to sin, but to try, to put to the test. It was so used twenty-eight times in the New Testament. To prove, to examine, to put to the test, that's the sense in which God did tempt Abraham. The particular demand of God was that Abraham should offer his son, the son of old age, the son of promise, the son through whom the covenant blessings would pass. Indeed, the only son. We feel it incredible; how much more must the father must have felt it so. He was to offer his son to God and God was to be responsible for the promises He had made through that son. It was God's problem how He would fulfill the promise after the child had been offered to him; it was Abraham's business only to obey. The demand was a severe testing of faith.

God's Word is the basis of faith

How could the promises of God and the command of God be reconciled? The promise of God was that Abraham's descendants through Isaac would be as numberless as the stars that were in heaven. When Abraham had no son, at the age of eight-six, he took a second wife and he had a son by her. But God said, "No, it shall be through the son that is born to you by Sarah that your descendants shall be called." And so, when Abraham was ninety-nine years old, Sarah conceived. When he was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety, Isaac was born and God said, "*in Isaac shall your seed be called.*" Now Abraham was offering his only begotten, his real heir. God had spoken the promise, and He spoke the command. Abraham responded to God's Word trusting His purpose.

God's power was the assurance of Abraham's faith. He accounted that God was able to raise up Isaac even from the dead, Hebrews 11 :19. Abraham was convinced of it. He saw a nation through that boy. So if he offered Isaac as a sacrifice to God, God could and would raise Isaac up from the dead to fulfill His promise. You see, Abraham had seen his nine, and yet God had given body as good as dead at the age of ninety life through a son born of him and Sarah. We know that son, even though Isaac was given by a miracle, God could produce a living nation, could restore him by a miracle. And indeed, in a figure, God did exactly that. When Abraham bound his son, laid him upon the altar, raised the knife of sacrifice over him, Isaac was as good as dead, and God stopped him and delivered his son to him alive.

God's vindication is in the testimony of faith

The Scripture says that God pronounced Abraham justified on the basis of his faith. Was God partial in such a pronouncement? Is it right that Abraham should believe God and God should count it to him for righteousness? Well, consider James

2:21-24, "*Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works when he had offered his son, Isaac, upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect? And Scripture was fulfilled which sayest, Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God*". Abraham proved his faith by his works, and showed that God was right in pronouncing him justified upon the basis of faith. Does faith justify, or do works justify? Faith justifies a person before God. Works justify a person before men. Abraham believed God. God knowing the validity of his faith, declared him justified. Then Abraham offered his only son to God believing God would raise him from the dead in order to fulfill His promises through him. In that act, Abraham demonstrated before men the reality, the validity of his faith, and the rightness of God in pronouncing him justified by faith.

Faith is strong apart from sight, How did Abraham know what God would do? He did not know. How did Abraham know that God would stop him before he actually offered his son in sacrifice? He did not know. He just know God was going to do something significant through that son and he acted in confidence God would do what He said. Do you remember the New English Bible version of Hebrews 11:1, "And what is faith? Faith gives substance to our hopes, and makes us certain of realities we do not see."

In the times of your testings of faith, believe God. Even if it appears God's leadings are in contradiction to His otherwise expressed purpose, believe God. Even if it appears the leading of God violates the very nature of God, believe God. God may put your faith to the test, but it is only to the purpose of helping you grow in order that "*...the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto the praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ,*" I Peter 1 :7. Therefore, be not faithless, but believing.

FAITH AND THE FAITHFUL GOD

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations," Deuteronomy 7:9.

It is safe to trust God; He is trustworthy. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph have demonstrated that God's faithfulness continues from generation to generation. Hebrews 11 :20-22 records their acts of faith in words like these: "*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob ... by faith Jacob ... blessed both the sons of Joseph ... By faith Joseph ... gave commandment concerning his bones.*" Let us review man's faith in God's faithfulness through four generations (Abraham to Isaac, to Jacob, to Joseph) to see illustrated the truth that God keeps His covenants even to a thousand generations.

Abraham demonstrated first generation faith

God called Abram to come out of the Ur of the Chaldees into a new land (Genesis 12:1). He promised to make Abram's descendants a great nation, to give them a land for their possession, and to give a spiritual blessing to all the world through them. Abram believed God and journeyed from Ur to Canaan, Ten years later, God renewed His covenant with Abram (Genesis 16) and promised to make his descendants as numberless as the stars (Genesis 15). Twenty-five years after Abram entered Canaan, God fulfilled His promise by giving Abram a son. Isaac was born when his father was one hundred years old and his mother was ninety. He was a unique "*son of God's promise.*" When Isaac was in his early teen age, God called for Abraham to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice upon an altar. Abraham went about with plan to do so, even to the extent of bringing Isaac, placing him upon an altar, and lifting a knife to sacrifice him. He was so sure God would fulfill His promise that he thought God would raise Isaac from death in order to do what He had said. God stopped him before he sacrificed his son, and promised the certain fulfillment of the promise He had made. Abraham taught Isaac the fear of the Lord. God had said of him . "*He will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.*" Genesis 18:19. Abraham set the example of faith in God for all his family to follow. He believed God.

Isaac demonstrated second-generation faith

Abraham and Sarah told Isaac the significance of his name. You see, "Isaac" means "laughter." God had made them to laugh by giving them a son in their old age, by direct divine intervention. Isaac was uniquely their son by the will of God. He was told of the covenant God made with Abraham, how Ishmael (Isaac's older half-brother) was rejected of God as heir to God's covenant with Abraham, but Isaac was God's chosen heir to the promise. Faith was born to Isaac's heart by the testimony of his parents.

Isaac remembered Mount Moriah where his father had bound him as a sacrifice upon an altar, but God had intervened to deliver him from death. He knew God had delivered him in order to perform His great covenant purpose in him as Abraham's son and heir.

Isaac was not free to marry a girl from the pagan tribes around them. He was chosen of God as heir to the promise and progenitor of the Messiah. His family line must be kept pure. Therefore, a servant was sent back to Mesopotamia to get a bride for Isaac of the family line, and brought back the beautiful Rebekah. Isaac felt himself in the line of God's pronounced purpose, and he lived in faith that the faithful God would do all He has promised.

When famine drove people from Palestine, Isaac was told of God to remain in the land promised to Abraham and his descendants. The same covenant which had been with

Abraham was renewed to Isaac. It was a testimony that God's purposes do not change with the changing circumstances of men, nor with succeeding generations.

Abraham did not see the promises fulfilled in his generation, but he believed and passed the promised blessings to Isaac. Isaac did not see the promises fulfilled in his generation, but he believed and passed the promised blessings to Jacob. Isaac was so sure that God's promises would be fulfilled, he passed the covenant blessings on to Jacob as a final act before his death.

Jacob demonstrated third-generation faith

Jacob was a twin; his brother's name was Esau. He lived a life of turmoil. He was given a name "Jacob" which means "supplanter; cheat; deceiver." At first, he had trouble with his brother and had to flee his home land to save his life. Then he had trouble with his father-in-law and at the end of twenty years serving him, slipped away without announcing his departure. He was a man with problems. Yet, he was a man chosen of God as an heir to the covenant made with Abraham.

God appeared to Jacob at Bethel, when he was fleeing from the anger of Esau, and confirmed to him the covenant given before to Abraham and to Isaac. The same terms of posterity, land, and a spiritual mission to the world, were still there. In his old age, Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph and passed these same promises on to them. He believed God was faithful to fulfill His promises.

Though it did not happen in the first generation, nor the second generation, nor the third generation, he had faith in the faithful God who remembers His covenant even to a thousand generations. By his special request, Jacob was buried in Egypt (though his son Joseph was prime minister there and though he died there). He believed God would give Canaan to the Hebrews and there he was buried.

Joseph represented fourth-generation faith

The faith that dwelt in Abraham, in Isaac, and in Jacob, dwelt in Joseph also. The parental influence of Jacob, the reminder of the faith of his fathers, and his parent's burial in Canaan, inspired him to trust God also.

He received no vision from God as had his fathers. No covenant was confirmed to him as it had been to his fathers. Yet, he believed that what God had promised He would also perform. He lived in Egypt more than ninety of his one hundred and ten years, yet he did not consider himself an Egyptian. He missed an elaborate monument in Egypt, upon his death, to receive a humble burial in Palestine. He believed that God would do as He promised and give the land of Canaan to the Hebrews. At his specific command, his body was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt (Genesis 50:24-26), but was not buried until many years later when Israel went forth in her exodus (Exodus 13:19) and his body was buried in Canaan (Joshua 24:32). He believed God.

Behold the chronology of faith. It began with Abraham. It was passed to his son

Isaac, his grandson Jacob, and his great grand son Joseph. Hebrews 11:13 testifies of them, "*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*"

It is safe to trust God. It is safe to trust God generation after generation. It is as safe to trust God today as it was in the days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. "*Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations,*" Deuteronomy 7:9. Have faith. He is faithful.

THE LIFE OF FAITH

Moses was preeminently a man of faith. Hebrews 11, the great "faith chapter" of the Bible, gives seven of its 40 verses to a review of faith in the life of Moses. His life was marked by an awareness of the presence and power of the unseen God. Let us review Hebrews 11:23-29 and draw five great truths from the experience of Moses which teach us to trust God today.

Trust God when He has not spoken, verse 23. The first act of faith in the life of Moses was the faith of his parents. The child was born under the edict of death. The Hebrews were bond slaves in Egypt. Pharaoh had decreed that every male child born to the Hebrews must be killed at birth (Exodus 1:22; 2:1-10). Moses' parents did not kill their new-born son as Pharaoh required. They saw that he was "*exceedingly fair*" (Acts 7:20,21) and realized God had a special purpose for the lad. They knew God would not approve of the slaughter of innocent infants. They felt their son was given them of God. By faith, they kept him alive, not fearing what Pharaoh might do if he found out.

God gave no specific instructions to Amram and Jochebed concerning their sparing the life of their little son. But people who serve God do not need a specific word concerning every decision. The things God has said teaches us to know the mind of God in those areas where He has not spoken. Like Amram and Jochebed, we can trust God even when there is no Biblical injunction to give guidance.

Trust God on the basis of ancient promises, verses 24-26

Moses looked upon Israel as "*the people of God.*" They were bond slaves; the Egyptians were their masters. He was a Hebrew with the privileges of an Egyptian. Yet, he remembered the covenant God made with Abraham (Exodus 2:11) and chose to identify himself with the Hebrew slaves. They were the chosen people of God.

Moses considered more than his present advantages. He evaluated "*the treasures of Egypt.*" He rationalized his high rank in Pharaoh's court as the "*son of Pharaoh's daughter.*" He considered his political power. He did not know how God would use

him as one of the Hebrews. In consideration of the "*recompense of the reward*," he identified himself as a Hebrew and rejected the privileges of an Egyptian. Moses subjected himself to reproach by his decision. He inherited a mean, base, and disgraceful lot by his identification as a Hebrew. He knew what God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and he knew the temporary reproach was much less than the permanent treasures to be enjoyed by the chosen nation.

God's ancient promises are as certain as if they were new. He keeps His covenants unto a thousand generations (Deuteronomy 7:9). It is safe to trust promises He made in Old Testament times as well as in New Testament times. Blessed is the man who trusts God, even on the basis of His ancient and yet unfulfilled promises. Trust God when He gives specific leading, verse 27. Hebrews 11:27 gives an excellent definition of faith. Concerning Moses it reports he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Indeed, faith makes us certain of realities we do not see.

The certainty of the unseen God caused Moses to "*forsake*" Egypt. The particular word used in the Greek text of Hebrews 11 :27 means to experience a heart renunciation. He did not merely leave Egypt; he left with no desire to turn back to it again. It is the same as when Levi left all, rose up and followed Jesus (Luke 5:28). The separation was definite and permanent. The reality of the unseen God caused Moses to have no fear of the anger of the King of Egypt. That is always the case, The more one fears God, the less he fears man. Moses could enter into Pharaoh's palace and speak the words of God because he had no fear of the man who sat on the throne of Egypt.

Moses believed in the unseen God and obeyed Him. Then God gave a manifestation of Himself to Moses to assure his faith. At the bush which burned with fire and was not consumed, God spoke with Moses face to face (Exodus 4). Many of God's people have followed God without visible signs and had their faith rewarded by seeing the manifestation of God in the affairs of men. God gave specific directions to Moses at that burning bush. From that time forward, Moses walked in the way made clear by the direct revelation of the purpose of God. You can know and follow the way of God by a study of Holy Scripture, interpretation of circumstances, and inner impression of the Holy Spirit. You will find greatest blessings when you walk in the way of God's leading.

Trust God when He provides protection, verse 28

Ten dread plagues fell upon Egypt to discipline her for her sin and to show the supremacy of the God of the Hebrews over the gods of the Egyptians. The last and worst of the plagues was the death of the first born of man and beast.

God gave warning before the plagues struck. He gave warning before the tenth plague came. He made provision for the Passover lamb, blood upon the door posts, and security from death. Through faith, believers in Israel "*kept the Passover*" and were delivered.

It is always safe to trust God for protection. He can be trusted to protect from physical harm and dangers. He can be trusted to protect from the spiritual dangers of death, judgment and hell. The person of faith finds it is safe to trust God to protect.

Trust God in times of greatest danger, verse 29

Moses led Israel out of Egypt in great joy. Their journey led them south-east to the edge of the Red Sea. Suddenly, they found themselves shut up against the sea by the pursuing armies of Pharaoh. Moses called to the terrified Hebrews, "*Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord*" (Exodus 14:13). God sent a strong east wind, the waters of the sea moved back and opened up so Israel went through the sea on dry ground with a wall of water on each side. They proved it is safe to trust God in times of greatest danger.

Review the five lessons to be learned from Hebrews 11 :23-29. **(1)** It is safe to trust God even when He has not spoken in detail on the matter before you. **(2)** It is safe to trust God on the basis of promises He made long ago. **(3)** It is safe to trust God when He gives clear and specific leading. **(4)** It is safe to trust God when He provides protection from physical or spiritual harm or danger. **(5)** It is safe to trust God with your life and your possessions. Learn those lessons well. Trust God. Trust God for all things. Trust God under all circumstances. Trust God at all times.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths," Proverbs 3:5,6.

FAITH AT THE WALLS OF JERICHO

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

Those fifteen words, contained in a single verse of Scripture (Hebrews 11:30), summarize the miracle and explain the power by which Israel captured the ancient city of Jericho. (The complete record is to be found in Joshua 6:1-27.) Let us review the place of faith in that great victory that we may learn to trust the Lord the more.

The Jericho of Joshua

Jericho was a military fortress located in the Jordan river valley near the north end of the Dead Sea. Its ancient purpose was to defend the land of Palestine from invaders approaching from the east. The city proper was surrounded by walls which enclosed approximately seven acres of land. There were two walls about the city, fifteen feet apart. The outer wall was six feet thick and the inner wall was twelve feet thick. The walls were thirty feet high, connected with beams across the top, with houses built on top of the walls. In a day when warfare was waged with arrows, spears, slings, and clubs, the fortress of Jericho was impregnable.

Yet, Jericho fell. It fell under the hand of God. The city was located on the top of a mound with the walls around the edge of the slope. God seemed to have laid His hand

on the walls and they fell outward down the incline. The outer wall fell and pulled the inner wall with it. Jericho fell by the power of God, not by the exploits of men. The method of conquest was assigned of God. The people were instructed to walk around the city one time each day for six days. On the seventh day they were to walk around the city seven times, shout, and see the walls fall.

Silence was commanded as they walked. They were not to speak to or to gain courage from a friend. They were to look at the defenses of the city until they grew hopeless. They were to walk, and look, and think until they cried out in their hearts, "Lord, we are absolutely helpless. Unless you intervene, the overthrow of the city is impossible."

God was the prominent figure in Israel's conquest of Jericho. The ark of the covenant was carried in front of the procession as the people walked around Jericho. (The ark is mentioned eleven times in the record of Joshua.) The priests of God followed the ark, blowing trumpets, to lead the people of God. Israel must know that from first to last the victory was given to her of God.

At last, the cry came, "*Shout: for the Lord hath given you the city.*" The people shouted. They shouted while the walls of Jericho stood firm. They shouted in the belief that Jericho was God's gift to them. They shouted the shout of faith and the walls fell down. That is why Hebrews 11:30 reads, "*BY FAITH the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.*" The shout of faith brought the blessings of God in the fall of that great military fortress called Jericho.

Your Jericho

Everyone faces some situation as impossible as the Jericho faced by Joshua and the people of Israel. Each condition which seems to be impossible to handle alone must be faced as Joshua faced Jericho.

Some of you are facing a "Jericho" within your own spirit. There is a passion too fierce for you to subdue. There is a fear too strong for you to conquer. There is a pride too ingrained for you to quit. There is an unbelief too settled for you to destroy. There is a rebellious disobedience to God's will too long permitted for you to overcome. Each impossible situation within is to you what Jericho was to Joshua. Some of you are facing a "Jericho" from without. You live in an environment hostile to spiritual things. You are under strong and constant pressure to lower your standards and conform to worldly ways. You have unsaved relatives or friends who present problems regarding your commitment and service to Jesus Christ. You suffer from association with nominal Christians who are living a stagnant spiritual life and find it impossible to rise above that level. Each impossible external situation challenges you as Joshua was challenged by Jericho.

The Word of God gives you hope. It announces "Every Jericho shall fall." God has already promised and provided victory over every impossible situation in your life. Believe it. Shout the shout of victory over it, even while the problem still

remains. And by faith, your impossible situation will fall and you will gain the victory.

The Conquest of Every Jericho

Every Jericho can be overcome, but God does not give the victory apart from man's cooperation. Think of the diligent labor expended as Israel marched around Jericho. The city was seven acres in size. They walked at sufficient distance outside the walls that they were out of the range of arrows or slings. They walked around the city thirteen times. Consider how much energy was involved as the thousands of people marched around and around.

Reverent obedience accompanied their diligent labor. For six days they did nothing but walk around the city and return to their camp. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times. Not once did they break rank nor speak a word. They reverently followed God's command.

Patient waiting marked their reverent obedience and their diligent labor. The enemy must have prepared for attack when Israel first moved out of her camp and marched across the plains toward Jericho. Then the column veered to the side, circled the city, and went back to camp. The defenders of Jericho thought the invaders concluded the city was too strong for them to attack. As the procedure was repeated day after day, people of Jericho must have jeered and mocked the people of Israel. But Israel marched silently, as God had commanded, and waited in patient confidence for Him to act.

Learn how to overcome your Jericho, your impossible problem. **(1)** Give your most diligent labor to its solution. **(2)** Reverently obey what God says to you concerning it. **(3)** Wait patiently for God to show the victory by faith.

Your victory over "Jericho" is given of God. The power for victory is in Him (Exodus 14:14). When Joshua and Israel completed their thirteenth circuit of Jericho, he commanded, "Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city." Israel did not take Jericho by her strength, but received it as God's free gift. That is the same way you will receive the victory of God over your impossible problems.

Victory is a mere question of time. The God who "...always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place" (I I Corinthians 2:14), will always give **victory to His** people who trust Him. God against any "Jericho" means God will triumph over that "Jericho. Confidentially relate all your circumstances to God. Relate your sins to God's grace, your needs to God's supply, your weakness to God's power, your helplessness to His helpfulness, and you will experience victory. He is what you need; He is all you need. Your "Jericho" will fall, too. Shout the shout of faith and claim the victory God gives, today.

FAITH AND THE SINNER

God honors the faith of a righteous man, of course, but what about faith exercised by a sinner? Hebrews 11 :31 answers in these words: "*By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies in peace.*" The Bible declares that God recognized and responded to the faith of a prostitute, named Rahab, and spared her life upon the basis of her faith. What a surprising truth: God honors the faith of a sinner who trusts Him.

The Bible record concerning Rahab is found in Joshua 2:1-24. She was a woman of low morals, a prostitute, who lived in the ancient city of Jericho. She had heard how God had been with the Hebrews in their exodus from Egypt and brought them through the wilderness to the borders of Canaan. Her faith in that God was expressed in this testimony, "*I know that the Lord God hath given you the land (of Palestine) ... for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath,*" Joshua 2:9, 11. Her faith caused her to help the people of God in their conquest of Jericho. Two spies had been sent by Joshua to view the defenses of the city of Jericho. Their presence was discovered by the rulers of the city who sought to apprehend them. Their lives were in immediate danger. The two men would surely be killed if they were found. Rahab knew of their danger. She came to their rescue by taking them to the top of her house, covering them with stalks of flax, and directing the searchers in another direction. Then she told the two Hebrews of her faith in God and secured their promise that she would be spared when they captured the city of Jericho. The faith of Rahab testifies that no sinner is beyond the exercise of faith in the true God. It teaches that each sinner who exercises faith is accepted of God. It calls to personal faith any sinner who shares these words of witness from Holy Scripture.

Faith Is Possible, Even For A Sinner

Every person suffers under the depravity of sin. God describes us all, the worst of us and the best of us, in these words: "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, there are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one ... *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,*" Romans 3:10-12,23. That describes you and me, as well as all others. There are no exceptions. Some people sin in open, flagrant, and shameful ways. Their offences shock the community. Others sin in one point, and in private areas of life. But all have sinned, just the same. The problem is not with "sins" (deeds of wrong-doing in the flesh) but with sin" (the nature within which prompts us to wrong doing). *God has spoken "...that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God,*" Romans 3:19.

Faith is possible, even among those who have sinned. The sinner is saved "*by grace through faith,*" Ephesians 3:8. God grants "repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18) to sinners in all generations, their repentance issuing in saving faith in Jesus Christ. I am saved because I am trusting Jesus. Every sinner who trusts Him will receive like

salvation. No one can excuse himself from being saved because he is so great a sinner. Saving faith is possible even for a person of a depraved and sinful nature.

Differing Motives May Move A Sinner To Faith

Rahab was moved to faith by her fear. Some people reject preaching or teaching on eternal judgment because they do not believe in a "Hell-scared religious faith." There is but one kind of true faith, and the motive which brings a person to the exercise of that faith does not change it. Rahab had heard how God had dried up the water of the Red Sea for Israel to cross, and how he had overcome the nations which dared to oppose their journey. She reported, *"As soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath."* True faith is true faith, whether it is motivated by fear or by promises.

Faith May Be Exercised In The Midst Of Universal Unbelief

Jericho was a large city in those ancient days. Rahab seems to have been the only person in the city who had living faith in Jehovah. She had come to faith through reports she had heard. She read no Bible inspired of God. She heard no preacher of the good news of God. She was not an eye witness to the great works of God. She had heard only the reports of what God was doing in behalf of the Hebrews. She heard and she believed, though no other citizen in her city shared her faith. No one can say that he cannot trust God because of the unbelief about him. Never! Faith is a relationship you bear in your heart with God. The New English Bible translates Hebrews 11:1 to give this definition of faith: "Faith gives substance to our hopes, and makes us certain of realities we do not see." You can be certain of the unseen reality of God whether any other person is believing it or not.

Faith Will Be Expressed By Attitude And Action

Rahab expressed her faith by her works. She risked her own life by hiding the Hebrew spies from the authorities of Jericho. She turned the searchers to a different path, that the Hebrews might escape. She did it because she had become convinced that the God of the Hebrews was the God over all.

Rahab's act of faith was so remarkable, it is used in the New Testament to illustrate the importance of actions accompanying belief. James 2:25 calls specific attention to Rahab's act of protecting the spies as proof that her faith was genuine.

Your faith will be proved to be true or untrue, according to the manner of life you lead. *"Faith without works is dead,"* James 2:20. *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also,"* James 2:26.

Faith Brings The Special Blessings Of God

What are the benefits of faith in God? Ask Rahab, the harlot turned believer. She

will reply, "Through faith, my life was saved. Through faith, my family was spared. Through faith, I became identified as one of God's chosen people. Through faith, I became a progenitor of the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world. Through faith, my name is recorded with honor (in spite of my former manner of life) in the Holy Bible." Yes, ask Rahab. She bears testimony that faith brings many benefits to those who trust God.

Where is your faith? Every person trusts someone or something. If you do not trust God, you are trusting yourself, or some other person. The Bible declares that God is sovereign over all the heavens and the earth. Each nation was thought to have its own particular God, in the day when Rahab believed in the Lord, but she believed that Jehovah was Lord of heaven, earth, and all nations of men and angels therein. As He was then, so He is today. *"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"* Daniel 4:35. Is God the object of your faith?

"And what is faith? Faith gives substance to our hopes, and makes us certain of realities we do not see." Hebrews 11:1 (NEB).

THE SCOPE OF FAITH

Behold the scope of faith! It is effectual for all people, of all places, in all generations, under all conditions, and in all stages of spiritual enlightenment. Behold the amazing scope of faith!

Hebrews 11, the great "Faith Chapter" of the Bible, declares by precept and example the wonderful ministry of faith. **(1)** As to its nature, faith makes us certain of realities we do not see, 11:1. **(2)** As to its necessity, without faith it is impossible to please God, 11:6. **(3)** As to its continuing validity, generation after generation lived and died with faith in God and none were disappointed in Him, 11:13. Yes, the "Faith Chapter" of the Bible is a testimony to the validity of faith, and an invitation for you to be one of the multitude that trusts God.

Faith Is Suitable For All People

Hebrews 11:32 calls the names of Gideon and Barak, of Samson and Japhthae, of David and Samuel, and refers to an unnamed and unnumbered line of prophets of God. Each was a man of faith. You can read the exploits of Gideon whose army of three hundred routed an invading army of thousands, Judges 7. You can read of the triumph of Barak whose army defeated the forces led by Sisera, Judges 4. You can read of Samson who received supernatural physical strength to do the work of God, Judges 13-16. You can read of the success of Jephthah, and David, and Samuel, and all the prophets. Each one will bear testimony that faith is valid: valid for the soldier, valid for the statesman, valid for the king, valid for the prophet; yes, faith in God is

suitable for all people.

Six people are named in Hebrews 11:32. Group them in pairs and a surprising thing becomes evident. The second person named in each pair lived before the first person named. For instance, the Bible lists Gideon and Barak, but Barak lived before Gideon. It speaks of Samson and Jephthah, but Jephthah was before Samson. David is named before Samuel, but Samuel lived before David. What significance is there to that reverse listing? God seems to be saying that the object of faith is the important thing, not the time in which a person exercises faith. Faith is the same for all people in all generations.

Faith Is Sufficient For All Needs

Hebrews 11:33-35 lists ten great victories which were given to the people of God in response to their faith. **(1)** Kingdoms were subdued through faith, as when Jehoshaphat believed God and put a choir of singers to lead his army into battle and discovered that God had set the enemy to fighting among themselves and they were destroyed before Israel arrived, 11 Chronicles 20. **(2)** Righteousness was wrought by faith, as when King Josiah believed God and led a great spiritual revival in Judah, 11 Kings 22-23. **(3)** Promises were obtained through faith, as when Abraham believed God and received the promise of a great posterity, a land inheritance for his descendants, and the opportunity to be a spiritual blessing to the world, Genesis 12:1-3. **(4)** The mouths of lions were stopped through faith, as when Daniel was protected by the angel of the Lord though he spent all night in a den of lions, Daniel 6:22. **(5)** The violence of fire was quenched through faith, as when the three Hebrews were cast into the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual, and yet came out without a smudge of soot, the sign of singe, or the smell of smoke. **(6)** The edge of the sword was escaped, as when Elijah was delivered from the vengeance of Jezebel, I Kings 19. **(7)** Strength came out of weakness, as when Samson was given supernatural physical strength (Judges 16:28), or when Sarah received strength to bear a child in old age, Hebrews 11:11. **(8)** Valiant fight followed faith, as when David went to battle against the giant Goliath and overcame him, I Samuel 17. **(9)** Armies of the aliens were put to flight as when Gideon dared to believe God and used three hundred men to attack an army of thousands, Judges 7. **(10)** Life was given to the dead through faith, as when the widow of Zerahath (I Kings 17:17-24) and the great woman of Shuman (11 Kings 4) each received a son back from death through the ministry of Elijah.

Those ten instances of the triumph of men and women who believed God are recorded for a specific purpose. They do not teach that God honors faith in those ten areas alone, but rather that God honors faith in every occasion of need. Those ten instances are recorded that we may have an illustration of how God responds to faith in every kind of need.

Faith Is Stronger Than All Suffering

It is not overcome when physical distress comes. Hebrews 11:35-38 enumerates the abuses which some of the faithful people of God have suffered through the years. Eleazer suffered torture under Antiochus Epihanes, for instance, when he refused to blaspheme his God by eating pork. Jeremiah was mocked and scourged, as well as suffering bonds and imprisonment, because he delivered the message given him of God, Jeremiah 20. Stephen was stoned to death because of his testimony concerning Jesus, Acts 7. Tradition says that Isaiah (and perhaps Jeremiah) was sawn in two by a wooden saw by the enemies of the Lord. Yes, multitudes of God's people have been abused and martyred. Their sufferings are expressed in the statement of Psalm 44:22, "*Yea, for thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*" Their faith remained vibrant in spite of their sufferings. Faith is stronger than pain. Lifestyle of those sufferers is described in Hebrews 11. They wandered about. They were destitute. They were afflicted. They were tormented. Oh, how much some of them suffered!

What lesson is to be found in the suffering of God's people? Learn that faith in God carries no guarantee of physical comfort. It rather Leaves the assurance of God's presence and God's provision. Faith must not falter because the way gets rough. Learn to trust God in the storm, even if the boat sinks.

Faith Is Steadfast In The Face Of Delay

The men and women of God in Old Testament times received the promises of God, believed Him, and acted as if that which was promised were already certain fact. Yet, they lived and died without seeing the promises of God fulfilled. They kept on believing even though they had no assurance except the promise of God. The Scripture says, "*these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them...*" Hebrews 11:13. They were convinced of the reality of that which they did not see. They had faith. Why did God delay to bring to pass the things He had promised? Not because He was unfaithful to His promises. He wanted to include us in the promise of hope. He wanted us to know the glad anticipation of faith. He was concerned about you and me!

Are you a person of faith? I conclude this series of studies on great men and women of faith (as listed in Hebrews 11) with a solemn reminder. "*Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe...*" Hebrews 11:6. Be sure your faith is settled in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the Savior who forgives you and the Lord who governs you. Jesus pronounced a special benediction upon people like you who live a long time after His personal ministry. He pronounced this word upon each one who trusts Him today, "*Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed,*" John 20:29.

I admonish you in love, "*Be not faithless, but believing,*" John 20:27.

