

LIVING BY FAITH

TEXT: HEBREWS 11:1-6

Introductory:

1. Our society rests on the faith which man has in man.
2. Bro. Riddell brought that out at our Christmas stewardship dinner back in December.
3. We have faith in the bank where we deposit our paycheck. We have faith in the water company, the utility company, etc.
4. FB Meyer said, "The workman, toiling through the week for the wage which he believes he will receive, the passenger, procuring a ticket for a distant town, because he believes the statements of the timetables, the sailor steering his bark with unerring accuracy in murky weather, because he believes in the mercantile charts and tables, the entire system of monetary credit, by which vast sums circulate from hand to hand without the use of a single coin - all these are illustrations of the immense importance of faith in the affairs of men" (*The Way into the Holiest*).
5. If we can put such faith in men, we should certainly be able to trust in God.
6. A Scripture that has blessed my soul this week is Psalm 57:2, "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me."
7. According to Scripture, the believer is able to count on the object promised as if it had already come into his actual possession (cf. Mark 11:24).
8. Therefore, we not only believe the promises of God are credible and trustworthy, but we can actually begin to enjoy in anticipation the blessings they offer.
9. This is the idea behind Hebrews 11:1. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
10. The Holy Spirit has given us this assurance of things hoped for, and the persuasion or conviction of things not yet seen.
11. Therefore, "faith is the faculty of realizing the unseen" (Meyer).
12. The world says, "Seeing is believing," but the child of God says, "Believing is seeing." We are as sure of what God had promised as we would be if we saw it already before our eyes.
13. For by faith the elders obtained a good report (11:2), or a good "testimony" (cf. 11:5). They lived by faith and so should we. And we should teach our children to live by faith.
14. Through faith we believe God created this world (11:3). "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).
15. And the Word of God says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

16. Faith believes God. Unbelief prefers to believe in evolution.
17. Through faith we believe God created this universe. Through faith we believe Jesus is coming back to earth again. Through faith we believe that the Lord is up in heaven preparing for us a house in glory with many mansions, and that some day we will be there with Him.
18. Through faith we believe in a literal heaven and a literal hell.
19. Through faith we believe and we receive the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
20. Our faith is quickened by the Spirit of God and by the Word of God.
21. FB Meyer said, "Sometimes faith seems to be given us in respect of some special matter which is not directly indicated in Scripture, but which we feel able to claim, yes, and as we pray and think over it we are still more able to claim it. And when we find such a conviction forming in our hearts, we may be perfectly sure of it. 'Whoever will say to this mountain, Be removed, and be cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but believe that those things which he says will come to pass, he shall have whatever he says.' Thus the child of God may begin to praise for blessings of which there is no outward sign, being as sure of them as though they had risen above the horizon, like the little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, to Elijah's prayer. 'We have the petitions that we desired of Him.'"

I. GREAT MEN OF FAITH.

1. Abel (11:4) shows us faith worshipping.
2. Enoch (11:5) shows us faith walking.
3. Noah (11:7) shows us faith witnessing.
4. Abraham is the man of faith (cf. Rom. 4:1-5, 9-25; Gal. 3:6-29).
5. Abraham's name is found 74 times in the New Testament, beginning with the very first verse. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1).
6. All together, Abraham is mentioned 300 times in Scripture.
7. Abraham believed God. "By faith..." (11:8).
8. Abraham obeyed God (11:8).
9. Abraham followed God (11:9).
10. Abraham looked for the city of God (11:10).

II. DIVERSE MEN & WOMEN OF FAITH.

1. In this list are women as well as men. Sarah is first mentioned as a great woman of faith (11:11ff).

2. Later on, Rahab is mentioned (11:31), and the women who received their dead raised to life again (11:35). This would include the widow woman from Zarephath (I Kings 17), and the Shunammite woman (II Kings 4).
3. It is indeed a diverse group, including Isaac, and his crafty son Jacob; Moses, the great lawgiver; and Joshua, his minister; Barak, the soldier Gideon; the mighty man of valour; and Samson the enigma; Jephthae, the judge who made the strange oath; David, the shepherd who became the great king; Samuel, the prophet; and various unnamed prophets who were persecuted and tormented ("Of whom the world was not worthy" -- 11:38).
4. The fascinating life of Joseph covers 20 chapters in the book of Genesis, but is only mentioned briefly in two verses here. "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones" (Heb. 11:21, 22).
5. Their occupations and backgrounds varied infinitely, but they had one thing in common -- they all lived by faith.

III. FAITH CAN OVERCOME GREAT DIFFICULTIES.

1. Faith enabled Abel to offer a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (11:4).
2. It is not always easy to walk by faith, but Enoch walked with God in a very wicked day and age, the days leading up to the flood (11:5).
3. It is difficult to trust God and obey God when all those around you are ungodly and indifferent, but Noah had faith and he obeyed God and built the ark (11:7).
4. It is difficult to leave home and family, and step out by faith, but Abraham did just that (11:8-10).
5. It is difficult to believe God will give you a child when you are way past the age of childbearing but Sarah had faith and God blessed her with a child at the age of ninety years old (11:11, 12).
6. FB Meyer said, "There are many difficulties before us all. Stormy seas forbid our passage, frowning fortifications bar our progress, mighty kingdoms defy our power, lions roar against us, fire lights its flaming barricade in our path, the sword, the armies of the alien, mockings, scourgings, bonds, and imprisonment -- all these menace our peace, darken our horizon, and try on us their power; but faith has conquered all these before, and it will do as much again. We will laugh at impossibility, we will tread the shores of the seas, certain they must make us a way, we will enter the dens of wild beasts and the furnaces of flame, sure that they are impotent to injure us, we will escape the edge of the sword, out of weakness become

strong, turn to flight armies of aliens, and set at nought all the power of the enemy. And all because we believe in God. Reckon on God's faithfulness. Look not at the winds and waves, but at His character and will. Get alone with Him, steeping your heart and mind in His precious and exceeding great promises. Be obedient to the utmost limit of your light. Walk in the Spirit, one of whose fruits is faith. So shall you be deemed worthy to join this band, whose names and exploits run over from this page into the chronicles of eternity, and to share their glorious heritage."

CONCLUSION:

1. I care not today what the morrow may bring,
If shadow or sunshine or rain,
The Lord I know ruleth o'er everything,
And all of my worries are vain.
 - Refrain:
Living by faith in Jesus above,
Trusting, confiding in His great love;
From all harm safe in His sheltering arm,
I'm living by faith and feel no alarm.
2. Though tempests may blow and the storm clouds arise,
Obscuring the brightness of life,
I'm never alarmed at the overcast skies—
The Master looks on at the strife.
3. I know that He safely will carry me through,
No matter what evils betide;
Why should I then care though the tempest may blow,
If Jesus walks close to my side.
4. Our Lord will return for His loved ones some day,
Our troubles will then all be o'er;
The Master so gently will lead us away,
Beyond that blest heavenly shore. -- James Wells