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THE HEROES OF FAITH

BY: C.D. COLE

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. 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. 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. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house: by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. 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. Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was

delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. 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, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. 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. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. 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. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper

child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae: of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of

cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented: (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Hebrews 11.

Paul's desire for his Jewish brethren is that they may persevere in faith in Christ. If they are to perform the duties, endure the trials, and secure the blessings of the Christian religion, they must persevere in their profession of faith in Christ. He realizes that nothing but a persevering faith in the word of God about Christ as a faithful and able high priest will carry them through the trials they have and will come upon them. He knows that nothing but a persevering faith will prove them to be real believers in Christ. He expresses the hope that they do not belong to them that drawback unto perdition, but they believe to the saving of the soul.

To encourage them to do what he wishes them to do, he now gives them examples from their own history of what men had done through persevering faith. Men of faith have always had their trials.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is the great faith chapter of the Bible. It is the master roll of God's faithful army. It contains the names of those who were famous for their faith in God. In it we have:

THE BASIS OF FAITH:

The basis of faith is the word of God. Faith rests upon the fact that God has spoken. Without revelation there can be imagination, but no faith. There can be philosophy but no faith. *"So then*

faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Romans 10:17. How can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?

THE NATURE OF FAITH:

Substance (confidence) is used five times: *"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,"* Hebrews 1:3. *"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end,"* Hebrews 3:14. *"Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting,"* II Corinthians 9:4. *"That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting,"* II Corinthians 11:17.

Evidence (conviction) is used two times: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,"* (translated reproof) II Timothy 3:16. Faith is confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. It is a state of the mind that makes it confident that what is hoped for will eventually be received; it is a conviction that God's word is true when it speaks of things that can not be seen or discerned by reason.

IMPORTANCE OF FAITH:

"By it the elders obtained a good report." God has given a favorable testimony about men of faith. Men of faith have not been held in high esteem by the world; they have been looked upon as cranks and fools by the world, but God gives a good report about him.

EXAMPLE OF FAITH:

Faith has respect to things not seen, and things that cannot be known by human reasoning or human experimentation. Creation is an object of faith. It is one of the things not seen. Nobody witnessed it, so there can be

no testimony of eye-witnesses as to how the world came into being. Human philosophy can throw no light on it. Science cannot tell us. The only way we can know is by faith, and faith rests upon God's word. God tells how it was done and faith is a state of mind that accepts his word about it. The worlds were not made out of things that do appear, but were spoken into existence. Ancient philosophers either believed that the world was eternal or that materials were eternal. Apart from faith in God's word nobody has or can know how the worlds were put into being.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE EFFICACY OR POWER OF FAITH:

ABEL: *"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,"* Hebrews 11:4. Abel's faith had respect to things hoped for.

(1) God gave to Cain and Abel a revelation of how to become righteous. He instituted a system of sacrificial offerings, telling them what to bring and when to bring it and how much to bring. Obedience to this command would make them acceptable to God and righteous in His sight.

(2) Both men came at the same time with their sacrifices at the end of days, or on the Sabbath. Cain was not irreligious--he brought a sacrifice to God, the fruit of the ground. Abel brought the firstlings of his flocks.

(3) God accepted Abel and his offering and rejected Cain and his offering. The man and his sacrifice are not separated; if his sacrifice is rejected he is rejected.

(4) Abel's offering was accepted because he offered it by faith. He brought what God told him to bring. When God instituted sacrifices He did not leave it to human judgment or human convenience or human pleasure as to what was brought. Abel took God at His word and brought what God

commanded for righteousness. Cain rejected God's word about the kind of sacrifice and substituted his own pleasure. Abel's was a more excellent sacrifice than Cain's. The word translated "more excellent" means fuller, larger, more abundant. In commanding sacrifice God wanted that which would typify Christ as the lamb of God. He specified a lamb with its blood as a reminder and confession of sin, and as the way of righteousness. The principle that without shedding of blood is no remission was in effect from the beginning. Abel accepted it. In faith he brought what God appointed. Cain could not have brought what he did in faith. If he had offered in faith he would have offered what God appointed, a slain lamb.

Abel obtained witness that he was righteous. God made known to Abel that his offering was accepted and that he was righteous. This was God's response to his faith. It was probably by causing fire to fall and consume the sacrifice.

Abel continued to speak after he died. His blood cried out from the ground against Cain. *"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel,"* Hebrews 12:24.

ENOCH: *"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,"* Hebrews 11:5. This verse shows faith respecting things hoped for. Enoch had a revelation of God. He was told that God would take him to heaven without dying. His translation was the thing hoped for, and faith was the confidence that he would not die. He obtained a good report. God testified that Enoch pleased him.

NOAH: *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness*

which is by faith," Hebrews 11:7. This verse shows faith respecting things hoped for and things not seen. Things not seen were the flood and destruction of the world; things hoped for--salvation from the flood.

FACTS:

(1) Noah was warned of God about the flood. This was something that had never been seen. It could not be known except by revelation. No signs of a coming flood.

(2) Noah moved with fear and built an ark. He believed what God said and was filled with fear. God's word reached the inward parts. He did not turn a deaf ear. He did not brush it aside. He did not forget it. God has given warning of a coming judgment worse than the flood, but many do not take it to heart. It incited no fear. It was not believed. There was no fear of God before their eyes. Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. The smart atheists today are calling believers fools and preachers who warn of an impending judgment, bunk howlers.

(3) Noah saved his house. His faith had great recompense of reward. It pays to take God at His word. He never jokes when He speaks. He always means what He says. He is faithful in what He says whether it is a word of warning or a promise. It is hard to tell whether some men mean what they say. You can hardly afford to take them seriously. They talk one way and act another way. Folks who treat God's word lightly will have to pay dearly for it. Noah's neighbors treated God's word as a joke and no doubt put their reasoning against it. Up to this time it had never rained. *"But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground,"* Genesis 2:6. They probably pointed out that there had never been a flood; that there were no signs of a flood; that there was nothing in nature to cause a flood, and that it was a waste of time to get ready

for such a thing. They probably made fun of Noah's boat. How did he know it would not sink? Nobody had ever sailed a boat. He could not demonstrate it. But after it had rained a few hours and when it was too late to make a boat; when the people began to stand in water up to their knees; when it began to rise higher and higher and the skies grew blacker and blacker, Noah safely housed in the ark and riding the waves; then it could be seen who was the fool. No man is ever a fool who takes God at His word.

(4) Noah condemned the world. He was a preacher of righteousness. He called men's attention to their wicked way of living. It took faith to do that. God had said the world was wicked and Noah preached it. He did not indulge in pleasing attitudes and flattering fancies. He preached what God told him to preach and in doing so he had to condemn the world.

(5) Noah became heir of righteousness by faith. Noah was saved not only from the flood but from the lake of fire. He was accepted as righteous before God. Noah must have seen in the ark a symbol of Jesus Christ as the ark of eternal safety from the destruction by fire. Noah saw Christ through the ark. Abel's lamb was a type of Christ in his sacrificial death; Noah's ark was a type of Christ as a place of safety from impending doom.

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The digital duplicator will cost around \$9,000. If you feel led to help, please send your offering to the Bryan Station Baptist Church and designate it for this purpose.

*In Christ,
Al Gormley*