

Hoeh_Herman-1980-11-01-Faith

I appreciate seeing all of you, the young lady who was seated next to me is the mother of the man who gave the sermonette.

I had the privilege of visiting during the Feast of Tabernacles with the New Hen family and it was the first time my wife and I had become acquainted with the matriarch shall we say, and I appreciate other members of the family who were also here.

As it turned out, Mr. and Mrs. Haas suggested that the subject I should deal with for you this afternoon should be Hebrews 11, but since that's been taken care of, I will deal with what was not included in the sermonette and we will deal with Hebrews 11 in a way that will be different and similar to what has been said here because the subject already introduced is very important in a number of ways.

We often think of the subject of faith as a mistaken concept based on the general religious background from which many have come.

I would like to illustrate a phenomenon that occurred in 1974 with one of the delightful older single women who had never married in the church and Fresno congregation.

When the problem broke and a deaconess and an elder left who were husband and wife and some others across the church were raising a stir in that year over problems that had not yet been addressed until 1978, this woman left.

I found out why she left.

She said she wanted to be among the people where there were no problems.

She couldn't stand it where there were difficulties, where she had to make decisions of a nature involving spiritual matters.

She wanted a church that was quiet.

She went to one that was dead, but that was her choice.

I have talked to her briefly since, but spiritually I'm afraid she's drifted in that direction.

What we have already perceived from Hebrews 11 is that faith is not for, as we have said before, Mr. Armstrong put it this way, it's not for the gimme.

People who always want to get from God, give me this, give me that.

Faith has been perceived, especially among those who have emphasized speaking in tongues, which is not really the tongues of the Bible, that you need faith to get healed.

You need faith to get prosperous.

You need faith, and it's always from the point of view of getting.

What we want to address today is what faith is really for in a much broader perspective.

If this woman whom I described had not lacked in faith, she would have been able to see herself through any crisis in a local church.

Let us turn to the 10th chapter of Hebrews where the story really begins that we want to address now.

In the 10th chapter we are merely continuing a sequence of events already delineated by all.

For this book is written to the Hebrews or the Jewish community essentially in the Middle East at the time, not the Greek-speaking world.

It was the world in which Aramaic was the dominant day-to-day language, a world in which Hebrew was understood for special religious matters in which Greek could be communicated with people who were from abroad.

The issue, of course, is Christ's role, and therefore our relationship to the Messiah was foretold in the law via the examples of the law of Moses, and how this man brought a new and living way so that we may address God, the Father, in heaven directly and not have to merely perform routine things from year to year in the presence of a temple never getting through to the Creator God himself.

Because the laws of Moses were not ordained to put man into contact with God the Father in heaven, but ordained to remind the people who performed those rituals and sacrifices the sins they had committed so they wouldn't commit them any further, but they went ahead anyway and had done so.

That's the background that I'm picking up out of a much broader story that focuses in on the ultimate promises of eternal life.

Now in enduring a situation where the nation as a whole did not perceive what had been done on that Passover in AD 31, there were many problems that those who did perceive faced.

Similar to some of the things, but by no means as serious for us in the last year and three quarters.

Paul in the 10th chapter warns the brethren what could happen to those who neglect assembling themselves together as the example of some had become in verse 25.

They got their mind off of the new understanding, the new and living way that had been revealed.

So Paul says that if we sin willfully, after we have the knowledge of the truth, there is no other sacrifice than the one Jesus who offered himself.

This one of whom Hoshia or Joshua the son of Nun was the forerunner.

As Joshua led the children of Israel through the Jordan into the promised land, so the Messiah whose Hebrew name could have been translated Joshua if the scriptures had been written in Hebrew.

But we happen to have it in the form of Jesus because the New Testament was not accepted by the Hebrew and Aramaic speaking people as a whole.

That is of the house of Judah, we're not talking about Gentiles who spoke Aramaic.

For God committed it in a language that would survive longer, which was Greek to modern times in order that it should not be a dead language and lost, which would happen to Aramaic as a whole, that having been replaced by Arabic in the Middle East.

So what we have here is the story of a Messiah who has given his life and of people from the community from which he came, the house of Judah, who were becoming neglectful.

What was added then, as Paul said here, is this necessity of calling to mind the fact that we have endured in the past, and it's much wiser to endure now through faith the hands that say to endure what the hands of men bring than to fall into the hands of the living God.

So we ask them in verse 32 that in contrast to the fearful thing that comes to those who fall into the hands of the living God, verse 31, is the need to call to remembrance our former days, and we'll address ourselves here, and like that community, there have been problems that some have endured.

That one, of course, was a far greater problem in that day.

He said, after you were illuminated, came to see what had here to fore been obscured.

You endured a great fight of afflictions, partly while you were made a gazing stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly while you became the companions of those who were so used.

For you had compassion on me in my bond, speaking of a later period in Paul's function.

Especially in the period of the late 50s when he was imprisoned in Palestine, and you took carefully the spoiling of your goods.

They had no alternative but what their goods were seized by the opposition in the community.

Knowing in yourselves that you have reserved at the throne of God in heaven a better and an enduring substance or reward.

So he says cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense in reward, in contrast to whatever physical things can be accumulated.

Do you have need of patience? That's a very important point, but after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise, which implies that between the time that God makes a promise and you receive it, there is often a longer period than you expected.

That can be true of healing, it can be true of any number of other things.

That's what often happens in a family.

The time between having married the man or woman that you plan to and having the marriage turn out the way you wanted it to can be rather long for some.

I take it some of us have understanding.

Now not to get off on that subject, but to remind you that patience is an important attribute while we endure illness, or sometimes marriage, business relations.

It takes time to build solutions, it takes time to receive the promise for yet a little while and he will come and will not wait.

The ultimate reward is coming and sometimes we have to be patient and work at it.

Now we are told that in the meantime, while we are supposed to be patient, the just, those who are justified by Christ and forgiven of sin, in this meantime we shall live by faith.

And if any man draw back, like those who were forsaking the assembling of themselves together, those who were neglecting the knowledge that they had received, if we draw back away from what

had been clearly revealed, getting our minds muddled on things of this world, intellectual, physical, financial, political, social, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

This is a quotation from the words of the Almighty.

We are not of those who draw back unto prediction, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

That is, till that point in time when we are made immortal and rescued from the ultimate penalty of death, which is eternal, the ultimate penalty of the law, which is eternal death.

Now that we have been introduced to the fact that the just shall live by faith, in a time in which we are told we have need of patience.

We now are told to look at the nature of faith, which too often is misunderstood.

Faith is the substance I'm reading from the King James Version I could read from some other good modern translations.

In my judgment this is one of those chapters that has been reasonably well translated in many renderings.

So we'll just simply take the Bible that we've commonly used over the years.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Substance has to do with what is visible, the natural world, the world of matter out of which this podium or your chair is made.

Faith acts in terms of things we hope for as having the same concrete value in the interim as the physical things around us give evidence of the physical world.

Faith acts as evidence of things that we really cannot see.

It is a state of thinking and of the mind in which we comprehend that which is hoped for and not yet seen, that is, that which pertains to a world to come.

So Paul's emphasis is not that faith is evidence here of being healed, of going to be making money, of getting a better job, of finding the right mate, the right position, the better social status, he's not associating faith at this point with all sorts of physical acquisitions in this life.

He is showing faith as an evidence of the long-range goal or reward.

By faith the elders, those who had preceded young or old, obtained a good report as their records were written up in the Scriptures preserved in the Jewish community, which was the congregation of Israel or God, congregation at that time.

Through faith also Paul says we understand what the Greeks did not, that the worlds that we see physically were framed not by the big bang only, without a God, but by the word of God, the person of Christ, and his spoken command, so that things which are visibly seen in the heavens above the clouds today, may be understood as not having been made of things which appear.

There's nothing stated in the end of verse 3 that the world was made out of nothing.

The world was not made out of something visible.

He did not say that it was made out ex nihilo, out of nothing, the Latin expression, where we comprehend that ultimately all things were made by the energy of the creative God, whose energy was through the spirit of God transformed into the structured world that we see visible and invisible to the human eye.

Getting back now to those who have lived in this world, by faith, here is the first man who lived by faith.

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.

He comprehended what it was that God expected.

We're not going to go into every example in detail, because there's some interesting things about the examples of those as Mr. Gene Newhan has already pointed out.

He comprehended by faith, that is, an awareness of things he did not fully see, that God was more pleased with the kind of sacrifice he brought, which exemplified that a Messiah should come to pay the penalty of sin.

Hence his sacrifice was of the Lamb, of the herd, because he saw that the time would come when someone would pay the penalty of sin for him, for his brother, for the human family.

Cain, of course, unfortunately, had been raised by his mother to believe he was that person who was to come.

He was the spoiled child.

When she said, I have gotten a man, the King James is translated as a man child, it translates it from the Lord.

She actually perceived that her firstborn son, Cain, was the Lord who was to come.

She thought of herself as the mother.

And this is how we have a child who thought of himself as the Son of God, and the beginner of the false religion of the world long before the flood in the Tower of Babel.

So by this sacrifice, as reflected in his faith, Abel obtained a witness that he was righteous, looking down the stream of time in patience, though he didn't even dream how long this would be, but it would be approximately 4,000 years later.

Not quite, but about 4,000 years later he looked down and in faith comprehended that someone would die to pay the penalty of his sin, by which his sin was forgiven and he was made righteous.

His sin, in the meantime, lay at Cain's door, figuratively speaking, you know these examples.

God testified, therefore, of these gifts of Abel by having his record written up, and by the written record of Abel's life, by that record, Abel being dead, yet speaks to Abel up by the experience recorded of him.

Now because Abel had faith, he, one, was forgiven, he was made right in God's sight, and, two, he was clobbered by his brother and died.

I want you to know what happens to men of faith.

The first man of faith was murdered by his brother.

Did you know that this can happen? Of course you did, but I don't think you reflected on it till you heard what has been said thus far today.

The first man of faith was murdered by a jealous brother who thought he was more important than he was.

You know the story of Abel in the book of Genesis, and Paul points this up uniquely.

A man who died because there were those in his own family who rejected him, who were jealous of him, and who were themselves unwilling to govern their own temper.

Faith did not prevent Cain from murdering Abel.

Abel's faith did not deliver him from that death.

Abel had to see patiently that the resurrection would come.

He had to live in the meantime by faith, even though the act of living by faith precipitated his murder, because it made his brother jealous.

Now we need to put this together because there are too many who, when the crisis comes, opt out and run away from the rewards because they want to save in the meantime what we call their hides.

My faith, Enoch, was removed or transported, translated.

You won't go into the definition of that, that's not our subject here, that he should not see what is obviously here the second death.

Because in looking at the story we found that Abel lived 365 years and those were all the days of his life, so he's not immortal.

He died not having received the promise, that's all been written up.

But by faith the second man who, in an age that needed patience, lived by faith or confidence in God to be made right in his eyes, he was removed from a world that he should also, in this case as with Abel, not see what is the ultimate death, the second death.

Now to testify to this man, God removed him so that he was in fact not found.

Because God had removed him.

Now before he was removed, that's what the translation means, he had this testimony that through his faith he had pleased God.

Now without faith it is impossible to please God.

He that comes to God must believe that he is, that's an aspect of faith, and that he also is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him.

No comment on verse 6 momentarily.

But let us note that here was a man who walked with God after age 65 and he walked with God for 300 years, and unlike others he was cut down with hardly more than 65% of his life.

He lost 65% of his life.

He was cut short in time, and God removed him and removed him so that his body was not even found, he was not seen.

That was a testimony of the fact that those who pass through this life will inherit a life that is not visible to human eyes, something that is invisible, eternal spirit.

By faith, Anarch's life was shortened, if you please, to far fewer years than would have been his in the normal family lineage.

Now he had the faith that pleased God.

He believed not only that God is, which implies that many of his generation were beginning to doubt that there was God, and he believed that God rewarded those who diligently seek him.

Eternal life is not a reward for your deeds, it is a gift of God.

What you do during eternal life will be compensation for your deeds now.

Let us have that clearly in mind.

There are many people who have come among us who believe that they should keep the Sabbath, they should observe the holy days, they should do what Herbert Armstrong commands them, or what your local minister commands you in order for you to inherit eternal life.

This is not the case.

Eternal life is a gift of God that comes by the nature of the spirit of God that is freely given if we have repented.

What we do in this life, by means of the Holy Spirit and through faith, will determine what the responsibility will be in the kingdom of God.

My faith, Noah, was warned of God of things that were not yet clearly seen.

There may have been clouds in the sky, but there had always been rain and sunshine.

So moved with fear and concern of what was to come, he prepared an arc or an unusual boat so that he saved his household, by which faith entrusting God, he also in a sense condemned the world that did not have the faith that perished in the waters that were brought.

And he became the heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

This is the story of a man unlike Abel.

This man, through faith, escaped a penalty.

Abel, through faith, endured a penalty, death at the hands of his brother.

Noah, by building an arc, through faith, escaped a penalty.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out to a place which he should after receive is an inheritance, obey.

Now here is an important definition of faith.

It is the capacity to enable you to obey God.

Tithing involves obedience.

Faith enables you to tithe when logically seeing 10% of your money slipped through your hands, you would think this is the worst way to save money there is.

Faith enables you to see beyond the 90% you have left that God will more than make up the difference in the long run.

And in the meantime you may need to have patience.

Faith is the evidence that the Christ who suffered in the flesh that we can be healed whose body was broken in our stead, that is his flesh, though not a bone of his body.

Faith is the evidence that God can and will heal that even in the meantime when you're offered all sorts of other alternatives that aren't really going to solve the problem often as promised.

Faith is what enables Abraham to obey, to leave the area where he was, where he was in a sense emotionally and chained to the religion of his family and his environment, to a land where he could be free to make decision, where the contrast was so obvious, you know, one of the more difficult things for people is that they tend to want to be where others are and in the rut where they have been before.

Faith enables you to step out and to go somewhere else to get a fresh start, as Abraham did.

But he had not gone to this land before, he might have gone to other lands, but not to this one that he was being promised.

So he sojourned in the land of promise, quite a strange country, with hills unlike the flat lands of southern Mesopotamia, and over the years he dwelt in temporary dwellings, tabernacles with his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, whom God called and so they were heirs with him of the same promise.

Now in the meantime God had told him that in this land of promise Abraham was ultimately going to find a city that God would build.

And so Abraham spent his time looking in the land of promise for the city that God was going to build.

That's what it says here, he looked for a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God.

That one is called, of course, in the book of Revelation, the New Jerusalem.

And when Abraham got there, in a sense God had said that he was going to be promised a place in that city which he should build, in place of the Calvaries or Heran in Mesopotamia.

But he sojourned in that land, a strange land, and looked, and looked, and yet did not find that city, because God had not yet brought it.

In the interim, through faith, his wife, Sara, herself received strength to conceive seed because it was beyond the normal time when she would be able to conceive a child, and that child, of course, was Isaac, because she judged God also faithful who had promised.

Let me interrupt and say there are those who sometimes beg God for children.

We do not always know why God does not provide children.

I don't even know sometimes why he does provide so many to some.

But God allows many things to happen in this world that he doesn't take any action on.

This is a world that God has said basically, hands off.

But let me say that sometimes there are people who have sought God to provide them with a child or children, and sometimes God knows better why it hasn't happened.

I can only tell you of a case many years ago in the church of a woman who had faith and really pleaded with God.

Her husband was an unconverted mind, and she didn't know it.

Probably we didn't fully know it at the time.

She conceived, and the child was to be born.

And as the child was being born, clearly alive, the doctor fractured its neck.

Sometimes God will answer when we ask over and over again.

I only tell you that it might be wiser sometimes also to let God make the wise decision and not to demand your way over much.

That's a sidelight, but Sarah, to whom a special promise was made, produced a child Isaac as a result of the fact that she exercised faith beyond the normal experience.

She was probably nearly 25 to 30 years, let's say, where she would not have expected a child.

From this man, Isaac, the child that was born, and from Abraham, of course, the father, there sprang, of course, this vast multitude of people, that we call the family of Esau and the family of Israel.

Now, all these patriarchs that we have here to forenamed and a matriarch, Sarah, these all died in faith.

The matriarch did not save them from the first death.

There are people who want to live perfect, healthy lives to the end of this life without any physical limitations.

We're having to deal in one local congregation where a woman wants to play the role of a minister and lay her hands on her grandmother, who was well over 80, nearly Mr. Armstrong's age, because she wants to show that she has certain gifts that can make this woman young and alive, not realizing that there comes a time when one does get old.

It's a form of vanity.

It's not faith in this case, and she has yet to see the problem.

Faith is what enabled all these people to live, obey, to be forgiven, to be righteous in God's eyes during life.

But the ultimate thing that they sought and trusted in, which is eternal life, the kingdom of God, the city, the new Jerusalem, the new civilization, none of these received any of those promises.

They only perceived them afar off.

They were persuaded that those promises would come.

They embraced them as if they were, but they were not yet, and confessed in the interim while they had patience that they were pilgrims and strangers in this world.

For they that say these things, or view religion this way, declare plainly that they seek a country to come, not the nations that are.

Now, if they had been mindful of their job, mindful of their bank account, mindful of their relatives, mindful of their social reputation, of those lands from whence they came, or the society from which you come, or the family tradition that you have inherited, why then you might have an opportunity to abandon and to go back, to be a part of the world that you came from.

You see, these people came from a world that was significant.

Mesopotamia was the heartland of civilization.

Some of you came from backgrounds of some significance in the world.

There are others, of course, who did not.

You were raised to the social level that you now are in the church.

But now these individuals by faith exhibited to others the fact that they desired a better country, which descends from heavenly sources and not the invention of human lines and politicians.

God therefore is not ashamed, for they were called, by faith.

They exhibited that trust in God to make them different characters than they were.

And so God is not ashamed to take ex-hormungers, ex-thieves and murderers, and to take ex-hormungers, ex-self-righteous people, and to change them and to give them his spirit and call them his sons.

That's what God does.

And if he is not ashamed, we should not, in turn, be ashamed of him.

By faith, further, Abraham, when he was tested as to what he would be willing to give up, offered up Isaac.

Faith enabled Abraham to be willing to give up what was most valuable to him.

Faith, according to many Christians, enables you to acquire what is most valuable in this physical life.

Faith enabled Abraham to be willing to give up what was most valuable.

Too many place the effect of faith on the get, the give me principle, rather than the give principle.

So he who had received Isaac as the fountain of the promises had to be willing to offer up his own son, in whom the promise had been confirmed, that in Isaac shall all these promises and conditions ultimately be fulfilled through his descendants.

Accounting in the meantime, when he was willing to offer up Isaac, that God was able to raise the dead.

Now there are people who believe that faith should enable us not to die before we're healed.

Let me explain that there are people who believe the opposite of what the world does.

The world is interesting in this sense.

The world doesn't believe God, and believes man, and believes what medical science can do, believes what the drug companies can do.

And when finally human ingenuity fails, when finally there's no more money for the drugs, then suddenly God becomes real.

But too often in the church, God is real.

Oh yes, well because the church is called the church of God, see, and other people have been healed, and now you are being tested.

And you are clearly headed for death if God doesn't heal.

And suddenly God isn't real at this point anymore.

And medicine is now real.

The drug companies are now real.

They have the solutions that can rescue you.

And if you don't go that route and you die, there are those who have been in the church who said, well, if God promises to heal and you die, that's a cop out.

Because then God isn't able to fulfill his promise, you're already dead.

And God really doesn't mean what he says, then you really can't believe what he says.

I want you to note that God said to Abraham that in Isaac should the promise be fulfilled, which demanded that he should be in health to be able to have children and descendants and descendants on down.

And suddenly God asked him to take his life.

My faith, Abraham, accounted that God was able to keep the promise, whether it be the promise of having children or whether it would be the promise to you of being healed of disease, even to the point that he is able to raise Isaac up from the dead, even to the point that he could raise you up from the dead, whether as with Lazarus, before the first resurrection, or in the first resurrection.

God asks you to trust him, not to trust him until, at which point he's failing, and then you go to men.

I say, if you decide that men is what you're ultimately going to go to, why don't you go there in the first place? By faith, Isaac blessed Jacob later, and Esau.

Now before they had produced any results, when Jacob was still a carnal-minded child, by faith Isaac blessed Jacob.

And by faith also, Jacob, after he became converted, blessed the sons of Joseph.

In other words, they had confidence that God would fulfill in their children and grandchildren what had been promised while there was no evidence that it was going to occur.

Isaac had one converted child, Jacob, and of all the children of Jacob there was one converted son, Joseph.

The rest were just carnal-minded, and now they were all in the land of Egypt, certainly hardly the promised land, yet by faith Joseph saw that the children of Israel would ultimately depart the land of Egypt.

And so mentioning when he was dying the promise of a departure of the children of Israel from Egypt he gave his sons a command to take up his bones and not leave them there.

He had faith that God would deliver the children of Israel some centuries downstream.

Much later, Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months.

Normally it was wiser to toss the child into the Nile.

Today we put them in trash bags and into the trash cans.

That's a little more modern, you can use plastic this way, and they're not seen floating.

Or do you know what's going on in society? The Greeks at least had the common sense to feed the children to the foxes, into the wolves.

As they lay them out, those they didn't want.

Today we build houses and we abort them before they're born.

But we toss them out into trash bags.

That kind of thing is happening in our society.

Now Moses' mother hid this young man.

She was supposed to dispose of him.

So she hid him and trusted God to keep him quiet for the first three months.

You can imagine the noises that disturbed him all the time.

Any of you who are parents know that children will awaken you at night.

We saw that this Moses was an unusual child in his appearance.

And beside that, they were by no means afraid of the King's commandment.

Most people today would have been afraid of the King's commandment.

And it would be better to save your life and to get rid of one than to save one and lose the life of everyone.

Now by faith, that was the example of Moses' parents.

Now Moses, when he was come of years, he was now roughly 40 years at quite a reputation at Pharaoh's court, decided not to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, but to take his chances with the children of Israel and to suffer the afflictions of the people of God.

I want you to notice that faith goes along with association with people who suffer affliction, those who have problems.

We are not promised in this life that there will be no problems.

So all the way through, you discover that association with the Church of God means you are going to be involved with the afflictions that come on others.

The handicapped, the elderly, the people in need, hence third tithe, and then problems of state and problems of school, and ultimately problems of religion.

He preferred that then to enjoy the pleasures of sin at the court of Pharaoh for a season.

He esteemed the reproach of looking to a promised Messiah, an anointed one who was yet to come, nearly 15 centuries downstream, as greater riches to be able to be forgiven by that one who was to come than all the stored treasures of Egypt, even to the point that you could be buried in gold and silver like Tutankhamun later was, for he had respect to the recompense of the reward.

That is, he saw the end result and realized it was better to wander as a shepherd with the children of Israel as it turned out in the Sinai than to live in the pomp and the glitter of the court of Egypt.

So by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, and he endured a period of 40 years in the wilderness as seeing him who was invisible.

Now that's, of course, we don't need to go into, but it's as if the invisible God was this real to him that he could see him, that God was so real it was as if God were there.

God was not, as some people say, to me.

We need to be avoided by God, you know, of the glory of the Lord on the cross.

And the people who came to come reared with God or arise with God was not, as some people say to me, well, when I was in an ambassador college, we were so busy studying what was required that I never could ask the big question, you know, does God exist? How can you prove Him? And we've had students that in the end, they come to me on occasion, either late in the college years or afterward, and they said, well, I was baptized such and such a time, but you know, I never really proved there was a God.

I said, what do you mean prove? Do you need to prove to yourself that there's a God? Who are you talking to when you pray? Once I know that there's a God who stands behind the written word that is here that we call the Bible, if I'm seeking proof, I'm only seeking it on behalf of someone else who needs that kind of proof, but I don't need that.

I do not have to intellectually prove how God could have created the world.

The world is sufficient evidence to me that I can't think of any other explanation.

God was this real to Moses.

And later on, of course, God did reveal Himself and was seen by Moses.

We will move along through faith.

Moses kept the Passover in Egypt, that sprinkling of the blood lest the firstborn and in his own family should be slain.

They passed through by faith the Red Sea.

You know that story as on dry land, a rather unusual feat.

So Moses was receiving all kinds of things, but you notice that in receiving it, Moses was also going through one trouble after another.

He had trouble with the king of Egypt.

He had trouble with the Egyptians, and God delivered him.

And when he got to the Red Sea, he had trouble again.

We only see the crossing of the Red Sea.

We don't see the problem they got into when they were trapped by the Red Sea.

You will discover, in other words, that men of faith such as Moses in following God trapped themselves in problems in this world.

And there are people who think they can buy their way out by compromising, reentering slavery like they could have and serving the king of Egypt again.

But Moses decided to trust God and do the most unlikely thing, to cross over a body of water as on dry land by having the water removed, which was the story on the last day of unleavened bread.

Here in the days of Joshua, who was the forerunner of the later Joshua, that rabbi from Galilee, as the Jews call him, that Galilean dreamer, by that first Joshua, the walls of the city of Jericho fell down after they had been encompassed for seven days.

Now they had to have a measure of faith, they also had something to do.

They were told what they had to do, seven days, walk around once, the seventh day, walk around seven times, and then they were to blow the trumpets, and then suddenly God took action and the walls of the city fell down flat, except for one part.

You should know what part that was, because we now come to the story of the harlot, Rahab, who lived on the wall, by faith the harlot, Rahab, now she was a professional woman, it's called the oldest profession there is.

She in Jericho did not perish with the rest of them that believed not, but God had called this woman, I could have thought of any number of other women that would have been better to call, couldn't you? God called the woman of the greatest notoriety and the worst reputation, and by faith she knew that as the walls were crumbling around her, that hers would not, because her father's house was built on these wide walls of the city.

She had faith that when she had received the spies, it was as if she had received God, because these were God's people, and she received them in peace.

And so now we come to verse 32, which has already been commented on, stolen from me, very nice, thank you, saved me going through this.

So we shall tell you that you should read what Gideon did in Barak, Jephthah, David and Samuel, and you'll notice that these men of faith had all sorts of problems.

David had an unaccountable number of problems more than I think the whole church put together, as recorded in the book of Psalms, or at least you took them awfully seriously, and you can read them and sing them as we do every Sabbath.

In the days of Gideon, the enemies were in the land, in the days of Barak, the enemies were in the land, in the days of Samson.

These were men who came in times of trouble to an understanding of truth.

They did not come to a knowledge in a time of peace.

When everything was easy, they came to knowledge of God in a time of crisis.

And you had to make the decisions that count.

These men through faith, as you know, subdued kingdoms that gained victories.

They wrought righteousness, that is, whereas they might have led a life of sin before.

And even during much of the time, as Samson did, he ultimately came to the point where he could give up his sin through faith and produce righteousness.

These men obtained promises.

And of course, like the prophets, Daniel stopped the mouths of lions.

Now that's quite a response, because normally it's the difficult thing to get a lion, you know, to live at peace with you and the lions, then.

But Daniel had faith that since he was being used as a prophet, and when he was tossed into the lion's den, that the king of Persia would ultimately see that he was alive.

And of course, David stopped the mouth of lions on more than one occasion, probably, certainly a lion and a bear.

These are remarkable things.

Those who would say, well, this can't happen because these are wild animals.

Faith is the knowledge that if you have authority and God has given you a responsibility, he will see it through to the end.

You remember Mr. Armstrong wrote in the autobiography of how one of the spirit-possessed individuals in a hospital took a flat iron under the pillow that had been secretly laid there and was going to hurl it at him.

And he commanded, this is in the autobiography, he commanded the person to hold that there and stop, and indeed the person, that is the spirit, to stop right there.

I've had to deal with problems like that, of spirits, and to know that God can tell them to stop when you command them to stop because you have the authority of Christ and Christ backs it up.

I had a person like that in my office who, in time of about ending our discussion when I had discovered what the problem was, came at me and I just simply told this individual to stop right there and it just froze.

I ordered it out of the room.

One of our men, now I think in the state of New York, brought a spirit-possessed individual to a hospital and the doctor addressed the case, the doctor was frightened by the personality and the minister just gave the personality of command to be quiet and to obey.

And when the doctor saw that, he said, well, I think everything's fine, you take care of him, he just walked out as fast as he could.

Frank McCready Jr. will tell you this story more perfectly.

He was the man who was left with the case.

These individuals quenched the violence of fire, you know the stories, and all the things they escaped were remarkable.

And usually what they were escaping, we see all these wonderful promises, but we never fully focus in on what it was like moments before the fire was quenched, moments before the lion's mouth was stopped, while he was still roaring, see, that's the thing.

Faith is the assurance of what God will do before you see the result.

After the mouth of the lion is stopped and the fire is out, faith has been fulfilled.

You don't need it on that occasion anymore.

We fail to realize how many remarkable deliverances were wrought in periods of personal and national crisis.

Women who had been blessed with children received the dead back to life, but we failed to focus in what it was like to see the child die, which is where most people lose faith, isn't it? Most people would have said, well, God let him die, God let her die.

How do I know there's a God if he could let that happen? Faith is the knowledge that the dead could come back to life, and the belief that in proper cases it can and will be done.

Others, and this was already commented on, were tortured and died as a result of the torture.

They didn't accept deliverance, which was the easy way out, the compromise, in order that they could obtain a better resurrection, because there's coming a second resurrection and a terrible resurrection.

You have the story of mockings and scourgings and imprisonment.

All of these things are illustrations, that people need its faith to endure problems from which they were never delivered.

We have too many who assume that if God doesn't do it right now, in this life, before we die, he's a failure, or you lose faith, and then you doubt yourself, but faith is not trust in yourself.

Faith is confidence in God, who was alive before the universe, throughout the duration of the universe, and ever shall be.

That's probably, if you can put it that way, as long lasting a confidence on which to pin your faith as you will ever need, the ever-living God.

There were individuals who in faith were stoned.

Now you could say now that you're tied to the stake, that God has to deliver you, because he promised, he promised to deliver you.

And here the stones come, and you remember, and I'll tell the story of a good friend of mine, you will remember as a man in prison once remembered, that God delivered Peter, that God was able to

deliver his people, and as he was going to be shot the next morning, he remembered that and trusted God, only to have crossed his mind the story of John the Baptist, who was beheaded in prison.

And now, of course, what was the answer? In his case, of course, as some of you know, very few, maybe some of you, God did answer, and he did escape.

My good friend, an Adventist elder, a co-worker, a reader of the plain truth and the good news, a man who risked his life hundreds of times in the Second World War to deliver Jews across the Vichy-French-Swiss and Spanish borders, John Weidner, who lives in Southern California.

A very real person who told me the story of what it's like to have faith, and to know when you compare both stories.

There was Peter, there was James and John, and James died, and Peter escaped, and John the Baptist died.

And you ultimately have to have faith that God knows what is best for you.

So here is the story of individuals who have to contemplate while they're being stoned, that there were some who were delivered, who were being tossed in the fiery furnace and in the lion's den and escaped, while you exercise faith and are getting hit on the head and in the ribs, and suddenly you go to sleep.

Faith as Isaiah, who was saw on a two, and others who were tempted and had to resist temptation.

Or like Paul had their heads cut off, copper, Roman justice, others who wandered in sheep skins and goat skins because they couldn't buy anything else, only from the shepherd who had nothing more to provide than that.

Here were men of faith who were destitute.

People who tithe and were destitute, brethren, that's what it says.

By faith you can tithe and trust God to prosper you while you have patience in your destitution.

That's the way it can be.

And for others the blessings of heaven are poured out.

Faith is your ability through the gift of God as Holy Spirit to obey despite the set of circumstances.

For too often we want faith when the sun shines, but not when it's cold and rainy or snowy and icy.

We want faith when all things go well so they go better still.

And we would like to have this section of Hebrews removed.

Now afflicted can be physical, it can be emotional, it can be mental.

There are people who don't want physical affliction we call disease.

And when they have it, they have lost patience because it hasn't gone from them.

And they're not being healed so God must be a failure.

These individuals who maintain faith through crisis the world is not worthy of, who ultimately may be found wandering in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth, which seems a very perfect description of a place of safety to me, or have you thought what it might be like.

New York in my judgment is not a place of safety for the church.

The most likely place is where nobody else wants to be in a desert where there are mountains and in the dens and in the caves and the mountains and the desert while the world has its civilization.

All of these who endure, who are willing to leave behind all their reputation, to have a good report or reputation from God through faith, still in this life have not received the promise.

You see the promises that Paul focuses on are not the things you can receive now.

That's nice.

It's nice to have all these brethren to share the company of so many others instead of your picky relatives who are not converted, to share the blessings we have socially, physically and being healed, but these are ultimately not the big promises.

The big promises are beyond the life that we now live, beyond the grasp of the human hand, but not beyond the grasp of the human mind.

Because faith is an aspect of mind, a recognition that what God has promised he will fulfill.

So verse 1 of chapter 12 ends, as we now draw this to a conclusion, that seeing that we are a compass about was so remarkable, a cloud of witnesses.

Now you might have thought of this group of witnesses as sunshine.

Paul likens it to a cloud because the story was gloomy, wasn't it? I'm sure he used it for another reason, but this story was very gloomy.

Look how many lived and suffered and died.

We are asked, therefore, not to lay aside light burdens and heavy burdens for nothing, to lay aside the sin that can easily be set us, and to run with patience the course that is set before us, looking to Jesus who is the author and the finisher.

He's the one who makes our faith possible.

Christ, listen, is the author of faith and the completer of faith in us, but we must have Christ live in us in order that faith be perfected.

And he illustrated what he can do in us in his physical life because of the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, the spiteful shame of his generation, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God, and in turn Christ promises to us that we ourselves should be able to sit down on thrones governing the nations, ruling them with a rod of iron, or at Christ's old right hand at Jerusalem itself.

Now I hope you will leave today with an entirely different perspective of why you need faith, because the times are not getting better.

And the worse they become, the more you need the faith.

Too many, when the crisis comes, opt out, draw back in a lost sight of the promises that go beyond anything that the human heart and mind can fully imagine.

I want to thank Mr. and Mrs. Haas for their invitation and Joseph Tkach for giving approval for this short visit this weekend with all of you.