Prayer Study #521

HEBREWS CHAPTER 11

First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

The Triumphs of Faith

11 *Now faith is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things hoped for (divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen [the conviction of their reality—faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses].* ***2*** *For by this [kind of] faith the men of old gained [divine] approval.*

3 *By faith [that is, with an inherent trust and enduring confidence in the power, wisdom and goodness of God] we understand that the worlds (universe, ages) were framed and created [formed, put in order, and equipped for their intended purpose] by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.*

The word *faith* is used only twice in the whole King James' Old Testament: In Deuteronomy 32:20, where the Lord is angry with His people because of their apostasy and sacrifices to demons, He says: *"…I will hide my face from them. I will see what their end shall be; for they are a very perverse generation, children*

in whom is NO FAITH. We find the word *faith* also in Habakkuk 2:4: *Behold, his soul that is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith.* Habakkuk 2:4 is the central theme of the Bible, i.e. faith in God brings life. On the other hand, pride brings death because it will not accept by faith the grace of God (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, & Hebrews 10:38).

In the New Testament *faith* is a central and powerful concept. Jesus Himself spoke of it often, sometimes because of the consequences of His disciples not having faith and calling them ones of *little faith* and often as praising those who showed great faith.

We know that every saved man has a measure of faith (Romans 12:3). In fact, the main difference between lost people and saved ones is, simply put, FAITH! We receive Christ only through faith, but the seed of faith grows and growing in faith is a lifelong process and comes by coming to new understanding and revelation of the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Faith is so important that the Word of God tells us that it is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6). Furthermore, Paul writes to the Romans that they are to operate in their gifts according to the proportion of their faith (Romans 12:6). Therefore, we should exercise our faith and

ask the Lord to increase it.

Every believer has faith, but few walk in the Gift of Faith. The Gift of Faith allows the recipient to walk in, not only the impossible, but also the improbable, neither of which is possible except through God. We would never belittle saving faith, which is so precious to us and allows us to come into relationship with Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit, but we live in a time when we need to see the exercise of, not only saving faith, but also the Gift of Faith so that we have a God-given enablement to believe God for the impossible.

These first three verses in Hebrews 11 give the most complete definition of faith found in the Bible. They bring to mind the scripture in 2nd Corinthians 5:7: *For we walk by faith, not by sight. Walking by faith and not by sight* should be a fundamental characteristic of every Christian. The writer to Hebrews tells us that faith involves assurance, hope, conviction, confidence, and spiritual eyes to see and to trust God.

The Faith Hall of Fame

4 *By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which it was testified of him that he was righteous (upright, in right standing with God), and God*

testified by accepting his gifts. And though he died, yet through [this act of] faith he still speaks. **5** *By faith [that pleased God] Enoch was caught up and taken to heaven so that he would not have a glimpse of death; and he was not found because God had taken him; for even before he was taken [to heaven], he received the testimony [still on record] that he had walked with God and pleased Him.* **6** *But without faith it is impossible to [walk with God and] please Him, for whoever comes [near] to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He rewards those who [earnestly and diligently] seek Him.* **7** *By faith [with confidence in God and His word] Noah, being warned by God about events not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his family. By this [act of obedience] he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.*
8 *By faith Abraham, when he was called [by God], obeyed by going to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went, not knowing where he was going.* **9** *By faith he lived as a foreigner in the promised land, as in a strange land, living in tents [as nomads] with Isaac and Jacob, who were fellow heirs of the same promise.* **10** *For he was [waiting expectantly and confidently] looking forward to the city which has foundations, [an eternal,*

heavenly city] whose architect and builder is God. ***11*** *By faith even Sarah herself received the ability to conceive [a child], even [when she was long] past the normal age for it, because she considered Him who had given her the promise to be reliable and true [to His word].* ***12*** *So from one man, though he was [physically] as good as dead, were born as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand on the seashore.*

13 *All these died in faith [guided and sustained by it], without receiving the [tangible fulfillment of God's] promises, only having seen (anticipated) them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.* ***14*** *Now those who say such things make it clear that they are looking for a country of their own.* ***15*** *And if they had been thinking of that country from which they departed [as their true home], they would have had [a continuing] opportunity to return.* ***16*** *But the truth is that they were longing for a better country, that is, a heavenly one. For that reason God is not ashamed [of them or] to be called their God [even to be surnamed their God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob]; for He has prepared a city for them.*

17 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested [that*

is, as the testing of his faith was still in progress], offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises [of God] was ready to sacrifice his only son [of promise]; ***18*** *to whom it was said, "Through Isaac your descendants shall be called."* ***19*** *For he considered [it reasonable to believe] that God was able to raise Isaac even from among the dead. [Indeed, in the sense that he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac in obedience to God] Abraham did receive him back [from the dead] figuratively speaking.* ***20*** *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau [believing what God revealed to him], even regarding things to come.* ***21*** *By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and bowed in worship, leaning on the top of his staff.* ***22*** *By faith Joseph, when he was dying, referred to [the promise of God for] the exodus of the sons of Israel [from Egypt], and gave instructions concerning [the burial of] his bones [in the land of the promise].*

23 *By faith Moses, after his birth, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful and divinely favored child; and they were not afraid of the king's (Pharaoh's) decree.* ***24*** *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,* ***25*** *because he preferred to endure the hardship of the people*

of God rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. ***26*** *He considered the reproach of the Christ [that is, the rebuke he would suffer for his faithful obedience to God] to be greater wealth than all the treasures of Egypt; for he looked ahead to the reward [promised by God].* ***27*** *By faith he left Egypt, being unafraid of the wrath of the king; for he endured [steadfastly], as seeing Him who is unseen.* ***28*** *By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood [on the doorposts], so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch them (the firstborn of Israel).* ***29*** *By faith the people [of Israel] crossed the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; but when the Egyptians attempted it they were drowned.*

30 *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days [by Joshua and the sons of Israel].* ***31*** *By faith Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed along with those who were disobedient, because she had welcomed the spies [sent by the sons of Israel] in peace.*

The writer to Hebrews next list those in the Faith Hall of Fame. Two characteristics, besides extraordinary faith, almost each one had were obedience to God and righteousness. Also, these were people who desired a better country, that is a heavenly. They knew they

were aliens just passing through the earthly realm but would eventually go to heaven. They include Abel who made a righteous sacrifice; Enoch who walked with God and never experienced physical death; Noah who built the ark, even before there was rain on the earth; Abraham who offered us Isaac; Sarah who, in advanced old age, conceived a child; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who possessed the Promised Land; Joseph who prophesied the exodus back to the Promised Land from Egypt; Moses, who gave up life in the palace to serve God and who, at God's instruction, initiated the Passover; the Israelites who crossed the Red Sea; Joshua who saw the walls of Jericho fall down; Rehab, the prostitute, who sided with the people of God.

32 *And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,* ***33*** *who by faith [that is, with an enduring trust in God and His promises] subdued kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promised blessings, closed the mouths of lions,* ***34*** *extinguished the power of [raging] fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became*

mighty and unbeatable in battle, putting enemy forces to flight. ***35*** *Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured [to death], refusing to accept release [offered on the condition of denying their faith], so that they would be resurrected to a better life;* ***36*** *and others experienced the trial of mocking and scourging [amid torture], and even chains and imprisonment.* ***37*** *They were stoned [to death], they were sawn in two, they were lured with tempting offers [to renounce their faith], they were put to death by the sword; they went about wrapped in the skins of sheep and goats, utterly destitute, oppressed, cruelly treated* ***38*** *(people of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and [living in] caves and holes in the ground.*
39 *And all of these, though they gained [divine] approval through their faith, did not receive [the fulfillment of] what was promised,* ***40*** *because God had us in mind and had something better for us, so that they [these men and women of authentic faith] would not be made perfect [that is, completed in Him] apart from us.*

These were only a few examples. The writer did not have time to list everyone but does mention by name Gideon, whose army of 300

destroyed the Midianites;
Barak; Barak, who, with Deborah, defeated the Canaanites; Samson, who defeated the Philistines; Jephthah, who delivered the Israelites from the Ammonites; David, who was a man after God's own heart and the greatest king of Israel; Samuel, the prophet, who was faithful to God, even when the authority over him (Eli) was not.

By faith these men and women trusted God and obtained blessings, subdued kingdoms and administered justice, closed the mouth of lions, extinquished fires, escaped dying by the sword, and saw the dead resurrected.

But there was an even greater witness of faith in God by others. These were they who were not delivered but suffered greatly for their faith. They were scourged and lived in great poverty, were imprisoned and murdered. They did not receive the fulfillment of the promises they were given here on earth. Nevertheless, they did not deny the faith because, by faith, they believed in the resurrection and knew that they would go to an eternal reward.

There will no doubt be those in this ministry who will pay the ultimate sacrifice for their faith in Jesus. We must pray for the protection of our missionaries and other sent out ones,

but, at the same time, we must be always confident in the goodness of God and recognize that those martyred for the faith have a very special place in the heart of Jesus.

ANDRAE CROUCH

The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power Lyrics

The blood that Jesus shed for me,
way back on Calvary;
the blood that gives me strength
from day to day,
it will never lose its power.

Chorus:
It reaches to the highest mountain,
and it flows to the lowest valley;
the blood that gives me strength
from day to day,
it will never lose its power.

Verse 2:
It soothes my doubts and calms my
fears,
and it dries all my tears;

the blood that gives me strength
from day to day,
it will never lose its power.

Chorus