

The just shall live by faith. Having been justified by faith, the believer now is to live by faith. The Spirit opens up for us a panoramic display highlighting faithful saints down through the ages. How touching. Just when the Hebrew saints might begin to think God has taken away everything He had given them through Moses He directs their thoughts back to the faith of their revered forbears. How refreshingly familiar these stories are. The faith of their fathers leaps out at them. And spiritually they are our fathers, too. Paul cites Abraham as the father of the faithful.

*Romans 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,*

Indeed **faith is reality** for the godly. And hope is the special form of faith that comprehends promised future events. Faith gives the believer the ability to see the unseen as revealed by the word of God. Things not seen or even dreamed of by those without faith. By faith the “elders” (men and women of ages past) dared to believe and act upon what they had been told by God. Doing so they obtained a good report, not only God’s approval but a good testimony to us and others. Our lives of faith also bear witness to those around us and those coming after us. We prioritize things differently than the world does.

Faith opens up to us a comprehension and understanding of the whole Creation and all we see and detect around us. Things of which those without faith in God remain sadly ignorant. They contrive wonderful theories attempting to explain things they have discovered through diligent scientific study of the universe and the world around us. But too many of them exclude God from their thinking. Therefore, while their facts may be scientifically reliable, their interpretations are ignorant if they willfully ignore the evidence for the almighty God contained in their discoveries. How sad! So near yet so far. Just think what they are missing in their pride. And of the scientifically ignorant they are misleading.

*Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 ¶ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, . . .*

*Hebrews 11:3 (DBY) By faith we apprehend that the worlds were framed by [the] word of God, so that that which is seen should not take its origin from things which appear. [Things that are visible, or that shine out as “obvious.”]*

The scriptures are replete with revelations regarding the creation and the Creator. By faith let Him instruct and fill out our understanding though them. And learn to interpret

all “scientific” and philosophical pronouncements found in text books and the media in the light of scripture. Learn to glean the factual information immersed in the sea of ungodly theory, interpretation and outright speculation that characterizes most “science” today. And be cautious in receiving the “creationist’s” theories, too. Not all that calls itself godly is correct. Avoid unfruitful debates about creation, particularly regarding a “young earth” vs. ancient earth controversy. Differences over the details of the creation story are not something to separate Christians from one another. But we can sort out and enjoy the valid scientific discoveries of the glories of God’s creation despite the twist often put on them by the ungodly. We can praise and glorify God for His marvelous work!

Next the Spirit takes us into His register of the faithful. Obviously this is only some of the faithful. The others we will not know until we are together with the Lord in glory. He has selected these for our instruction and inspiration. Often details given are sparse, but occasionally information or an interpretation is given that is not found elsewhere in scripture or history. But this is what God wants us to know and see by faith. Enjoy and heed.

Abel is the first mentioned. Not Adam. While there are signs Adam actually had faith in God, He did not display him as a good example. His initial disobedient act far overshadowed his faith. Abel is introduced here offering a sacrifice of a flesh and blood animal to God. How did he know that would be accepted and valued by God? We don’t read of instructions or commandments regarding sacrifice given to Adam or of Adam offering sacrifices though he surely did. All that is given for faith is the example of God providing coats of skin to cover Adam and Eve’s nakedness. Blood sacrifices were needed to procure the skins. More were needed for Cain and Abel when they came along.

A clear reminder of this original sacrifice is found in the law of the Burnt Offering given Moses, Leviticus 7:8. The skin was not to be burned though all the rest of the animal, the meat, the innards, even it’s dung was. The skin was given the priest. (The meat was not eaten in Adam’s day for that was not authorized by God until after the Flood. It was all burned on the altar.) Doubtless the coats of leather provided by God were exquisitely tailored and fitted, not the rough skins depicted by artists picturing “early man.” God could have used wool or animal hair or plant fibers such as cotton or linen. But there was a deeper issue at stake. The provision of leather clothing was typical of a moral need for a covering for sin requiring bloodshed. Cain rejected that need. Cain brought the produce of the ground. The ground that had been cursed by God after Adam’s sin. By offering a lamb Abel obtained witness he was righteous in God’s sight.

Abel was the first man to die. He went to heaven, accepted in the blood of the One whose death his sacrifice anticipated. He died a martyr for his faith, a signal for the millions of faithful to follow his faith.

(Over)

Three saints named early in Genesis died in the opposite order of their birth Abel, Enoch (who didn't die) and Adam in that order. Abel the first, a murder/martyr victim. Enoch was translated to heaven without dying. And last, Adam reaped the natural consequence stemming from his sin, death.

Enoch was not found, nor was Elijah 3000 years later. Enoch just disappeared (some think perhaps while being hunted down). These two, before and after the Flood, represent the Rapture which we await today. No one will see us go either. Enoch had the testimony that He pleased God. The Spirit here displays the three different means He uses to bring believers to glory. Each believer alive today will exit the earth by one of these three ways. Are you ready? Adam is conspicuous by not being mentioned here in Hebrews at all. Paul mentions him in Romans 5:12, and elsewhere, in contrast to Christ.

Upon giving Enoch's testimony that he pleased God the Spirit pauses in the narrative to speak some more of faith. Without faith it is impossible to please Him. Why? For he that comes to God must believe two things. Note, believe, not do. Believe that God IS, and believe that God will reward them that diligently seek Him. The reward is God Himself. How many neglect, decline or refuse to seek God during their lifetime. Some try to earn His favor, others demand He accept them, and others simply wish they could enjoy the blessings He can give, but He says,

Matthew 7:7 *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*

James 4:6 *But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

Noah was the final example of early men of faith receiving a unique outcome by faith. He was preserved by God **through** the judgement He brought in the destruction of the world that then was, living to enter and oversee the repopulation of a cleansed and changed world. None of us will experience that.

Revelation 3:10 *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

Noah's faith was remarkable for believing God's warnings. He was about to bring judgement by means of things not seen before in the history of the earth. A worldwide deluge. Peter tells us he was a preacher of righteousness, faithfully warning his fellow earthlings of the judgement to come and providing a great way of escape. Jesus refers to him by name as well,

Matthew 24:38 *For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,*

See Luke 17:27 also. His story is real and authentic, and is even borne out by legends and myths preserved by hundreds of tribes and cultures throughout the world. See also 2Peter 3:3-7. He became the father of the whole human race now on earth. A new start, but which would soon enough revert back to the sinful ways of his pre-diluvial neighbors. But Noah, though he condemned the world by his faith, became heir of righteousness, the ancestor of the Savior and Messiah who would bring righteousness to the earth ravaged by sin.

Next the Spirit opens a new spectacle of faith. He probes the depth and scope of faith demonstrated in one remarkable man, Abraham. His story takes one third of the chapter. God's call of Abram, Acts 7:3, is a clear example of His sovereign choice, as was His call of Saul of Tarsus. His call inspired Abram's lifelong faith. By faith he laid the foundation for all God has done since, both through Israel and the Church. God appeared to Abram, called him to receive an inheritance and he went, not even knowing where he was going! This "blind" faith characterized his whole life. He believed what God told him and followed Him not knowing what to expect. The object of his heart was God Himself not some object or future set before him. Genesis 15 clearly presents this aspect of Abraham's faith.

*1 the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*

Abraham whole heartedly bought in, and God elevated the walk of faith commenced in Ur to a higher level. God renewed His promise, this time with an oath, that Abraham's descendants would occupy the land that God had given him. God would displace the Canaanites from their cities when their iniquity was full, **BUT that he would go to his fathers in peace.** This statement is key to the rest of Abraham's life.

Genesis 15:15 *And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age, (read all of Genesis 15.)*

Obviously then he was NOT going to possess anything but a tomb here during his lifetime. So, Hebrews tells us, he simply believed God and thereafter in faith looked for a city above whose architect and builder is God. (And Israel did indeed 400 years later invade and dispossess the Canaanites and occupy their cities.)

From the beginning Abram seemed more interested in following God than occupying a land promised for a possession. The story takes him to a tent in a foreign pasture land. A land occupied by various nomadic tribes descended from Canaan, a son of Ham. No permission or invasion was necessary, he just walked in, with wife, nephew and flocks. But he didn't build a house and settle down. He didn't move into a city with the natives. They were wicked. He didn't try to build a city as Cain, and later Nimrod had. He lived in tents, patiently as a sojourner, an alien, a foreigner, in the land promised to be his. He died there as did his son, Isaac, without receiving the land. Jacob didn't receive the promised land either. He

died down in Egypt though he was buried back in Canaan. How could they do this? By faith! Hebrews tells us they looked for a city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. But what promise did they rest upon for this? Some think perhaps they weren't even given a specific promise of a city and the Spirit simply tells the Hebrews here what the patriarchs were blindly waiting for in faith. Either way one point here seems to be that the journey is just as important as the destination. The walk of faith with God is as important as the hoped for destination with God.

We are told here what we aren't told in Genesis. Abraham, and later Isaac and Jacob, concluded God had a city above in their future. History gave some clues. Faithful Abel was dead. Enoch was gone. Righteous Noah had died. Shem was very old. These faithful forbears had not inherited any earthly city before "sleeping with their fathers." Where were they? It was evident God was not going give Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or Joseph a possession on earth during their lifetimes, much less a city. So they waited in faith, as aliens in tents, in a foreign land. Waited for God to build them a city which has foundations. Abraham is still not in the city but in Paradise. See Luke 16:22-31; and 23:43. The promised city is still pending, see Revelation 21 and 22. But God had more to do first. Much more, including a Cross. So the readers of this

epistle to the Hebrews are being handed the same heavenly outlook their forefathers had. God Himself, not just heaven!

*vv. 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

*ch. 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,*

Here special mention is made of the faith of Sarah who, though she laughed at first hearing the preposterous promise of a son, believed after being confronted by God. We learn here what isn't told in the Genesis account. She, by faith, judged Him faithful who had promised. And because of her faith and Abraham's faith, (both their faith was essential) a son was conceived and born. From one man, Abraham, (through Sarah, not Hagar) came innumerable progeny, as the stars of the sky and the sand of the sea for multitude. Both heavenly and earthly heirs. Both spiritual offspring and physical offspring. But the focus here is upon their heavenly inheritance and a heavenly city. The city God has prepared for all believers, all of faith who live here on earth before the Lord returns to reign. Be there.

By Ron Canner, April 22, 2009