

BY FAITH

THIS MORNING'S READING AND NEXT WEEK'S READING COMPRISE THE **GREAT FAITH CHAPTER OF HEBREWS AND THE BIBLE**. THE WELL KNOWN VERSE OF HEBREWS 11 "*Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.*" CHAPTER ELEVEN GOES ON WITH A LIST OF THE WHO'S WHO OF THE BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF FAITH AND THE POWER OF FAITH.

HERE WE SIT THIS MORNING BLESSED BECAUSE OF WHAT THESE PEOPLE NEVER SAW, BUT HOPED FOR – THE MIGHTY WORK OF JESUS CHRIST. THERE IS A WORD, USED IN ONLY A FEW VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE, BUT I HAVE LEARNED IT IS THE WORD CLOSEST IN MEANING TO WHAT JESUS DID AND ONLY BEGINS TO GRASP THE DEPTH OF IT. THE WORD IS *PROPITIATION, meaning a substitute for the anger of God*. **JESUS BECAME SIN AND THROUGH HIS OBEDIENCE SATISFIED GOD'S ANGER AND JUDGMENT**. IF YOU LOOK UP ROMANS 3:25 OR I JOHN 2:2 AND 4:10 YOU WILL BE FIND THE WORD USED TO GIVE MEANING TO WHAT JESUS DID FOR EACH AND EVERYONE OF US!

NOW AS WE CHECK THIS LIST OF THE "GIANTS" OF OUR FAITH, REMEMBER THESE WERE VERY ORDINARY PEOPLE – SHEPHERDS, FARMERS, FISHERMEN, JUST EVERYDAY PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND I. THEN IF WE READ AHEAD TO VERSES 30-40, THE "GIANTS" OF THIS FAITH CHAPTER, **MANY ARE NOT NAMED, BUT ARE REFERRED TO BY DIFFERING TRIALS AND ACTIONS THEY ENDURED**.

THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE OF GREAT FAITH, PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS , AUNTS AND UNCLES, WHOSE NAME IS NOT ON SOME LIST, BUT WE KNOW, BECAUSE WE HAVE SEEN THEIR FAITH IN ACTION AND BLESSED BY IT. IN ROMANS 12:3 IN THE ENDING WORDS IT SAYS "*measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.*" OR I CORINTHIANS 12:4 "*A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.*" **SO YOU ARE ALSO A "GIANT" OF THE FAITH TOO, IF YOU OR I CHOOSE TO BE!**

SOMETHING THIS LIST IS NOT, IS A LIST OF PEOPLE WHO NEVER MADE A MISTAKE! WE CAN EASILY GET DOWN ON OURSELVES AND THROW OUR HANDS UP IN THE AIR AND SAY "GOD DOESN'T WANT ME, HE CAN'T USE ME! I AM NOT WORTHY" GOD USES ANY ONE. HE DOESN'T EXPECT PERFECTION, HE DESIRES OBEDIENCE.

LETS LOOK AT THESE "GIANTS" AND WHAT IT WAS ABOUT THEIR FAITH. FIRST IS **ABEL** WHO WITNESSED FOR GOD BY HIS OFFERING. **TODAY OUR SACRIFICE TO GOD IS NOT AN**

ANIMAL BUT AN OFFERING OF MONEY, WHICH SIGNIFIES OUR LABOR. WOULD GOD BE PLEASED WITH OUR SACRIFICE AS HE WAS WITH ABEL'S?

NOW **ENOCH** WE MAY NOT BE AS FAMILIAR WITH HIM AS WE WERE WITH ABEL. ENOCH WE ARE TOLD ENOCH WAS PLEASING TO GOD. REMEMBER ENOCH LIVED IN THE TIME JUST BEFORE NOAH WHEN THERE WAS A VERY WICKED WORLD. THEN IN A DIRECT REFERENCE TO FAITH WE ARE TOLD WITH IT "*It is impossible to please God*" AND THE REST OF THE VERSE IS INTERESTING "*For he who comes to God must believe He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him*". **REALLY BASIC, BELIEVE IN HIM AND HE REWARDS US WHO SEEK HIM.** A FEW WEEKS AGO IN THE A.S.K. SERMON, "*Seek and you will find*", "*Ask and it shall be given to you*". PROMISES GOD HAS MADE TO HIS CHILDREN AND HIS SON, JESUS, REPEATED.

HERE IS ANOTHER FAMILIAR "GIANT", IS **NOAH**. A MAN WHO WAS WARNED BY GOD AND TOOK HIM AT HIS WORD. SIMPLY SAID – **HE TRUSTED GOD**. HOW MANY OF US WHEN IT GETS DOWN TO THE NITTY GRITTY WANT TO HAVE CONTROL IN ORDER TO MOVE THINGS IN ONE DIRECTION OR THE OTHER. FAITH, CONFIDENCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR HOPE AND CONVICTION OF THINGS NOT SEEN. NEXT TIME THE UNEXPECTED COMES ALONG TRY TRUSTING GOD UNTIL IT'S OVER OR YOU ARE THROUGH IT!

NOW A REAL "GIANT". **ABRAHAM** IS THE MAN WHO CALLED BY GOD, OBEYED, AND WENT AS VERSE 8 SAYS "*By faith*". THE VERSE TELLS US THAT "*He went out not knowing where he was going*". FAITH, REAL FAITH BY THE GRACE OF GOD. WE KNOW THE ENDING OF ABRAHAM'S STORY, HE BECAME THE FATHER OF ALL NATIONS AND PROSPERED.

JACOB, GRANDSON OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH, CAME TO REALIZE BY FAITH THAT GOD'S PLANS WILL NOT BE SIDETRACKED. HE PASSED ALONG BLESSINGS AND WORSHIPED HIS GOD.

OF COURSE WE ALL KNOW **MOSES**. THIS IS THE MAN WHO TURNED HIS BACK ON THE THINGS OF THE WORLD AND BY FAITH WENT TO "WORK" FOR GOD WITHOUT A CLEAR SIGN OR SIGNAL TO MOVE ON. AGAIN, IT IS TRUSTING GOD WHEN WE DON'T SEE A CLEAR PATH OR DIRECTION. **IT IS MUCH EASIER IN THIS WORLD TO DO SOMETHING WHEN WE SEE PLANS, DIRECTION, OR SIGNS. BUT FAITH HAS US TAKE STEPS WHEN WE SEE NOTHING AND MOVE AHEAD, BECAUSE WE KNOW GOD HAS PLANS FOR GOOD NOT HARM AND TO PROSPER IN WAYS WE HAVE YET TO SEE.** AFTER ALL HE HAS GOTTEN YOU THIS FAR, RIGHT?

NOW COMES A **LARGE OBSTACLE** OF FAITH FOR MANY PEOPLE. IT "HITS" US ALL FROM TIME TO TIME. **THE BATTLE OF REASONING AND FAITH**. AFTER ALL IN ISAIAH 1:18 THE WORDS OF THE PROPHET "*Come now let us reason together*". HOWEVER, **REASONING CAN BE A FAITH KILLER FOCUSING ON LIMITATIONS AND THE NEGATIVE, LEAVING NO ROOM FOR FAITH.**

A YOUNG STUDENT WAS CIRCULATING A PETITION TO CONTROL OR ELIMINATE THE CHEMICAL DIHYDROGEN MONOXIDE. HE WAS SHOWING HOW WE HAVE BECOME CONDITIONED TO FEAR SO MANY THINGS IN OUR ENVIRONMENT. AFTER ALL THIS CHEMICAL CAN

1. It can cause excessive sweating and vomiting.
2. It is a major component in acid rain.
3. It can cause severe burns in its gaseous state.
4. Accidental inhalation can kill you.
5. It contributes to erosion.
6. It decreases the effectiveness of automobile brakes.
7. It has been found in tumors of terminal cancer patients.

THIS CHEMICAL IS WATER!!!! H₂O.

GOD DOES NOT WANT US TO PUT OUR MINDS IN IDLE AND FORGET REASONING, BUT WE CAN NOT FORGET TO HAVE FAITH TOO. COULD WE LIMIT OUR DEFINITION OF FAITH TO TWO WORDS? MAYBE "**CERTAIN AND SURE**" MIGHT BE THOSE TWO WORDS. YET REASON TELLS US THERE ARE VERY FEW CERTAIN OR SURE THINGS IN THIS WORLD. WE AS DISCIPLES THOUGH "OPERATE" ON A DIFFERENT LEVEL BEYOND REASON INTO THE REALM OF FAITH!!! TODAY'S READINGS ARE CLEAR PICTURES OF "OPERATING" IN THAT REALM OF FAITH. **IN FACT EVERYDAY WE OPERATE ON FAITH, FAITH IN GRAVITY, FAITH THAT BRIDGE WILL NOT COLLAPSE OR THAT DRIVER WILL NOT COME ACROSS THE ROAD.**

THERE IS AN EXAMPLE IN NUMBERS WHEN CALEB SENDS OUT THE SPIES TO GIVE A REPORT AND THE REPORT ONLY FOCUSED ON THE GIANTS IN THE LAND WHILE CALEB SPEAKS WORDS OF FAITH BASED ON GOD'S PROMISES. LIKE EACH ONE OF US IN THIS BATTLE OF REASONING AND FAITH, **THERE IS A CHOICE TO BE MADE. RELYING SOLELY ON REASONING A DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY WAS CLOSED.** IT WAS NOT UNTIL FORTY YEARS LATER WHEN THE DOOR OPENED AGAIN THAT THE PEOPLE STEPPED OUT IN FAITH AND ACTED ON THE PROMISES OF GOD.

LOOK AT ALL THE PEOPLE MENTIONED TODAY LIKE NOAH WERE ASKED TO DO SOMETHING IN FAITH, DEFINITELY BEYOND THE REALM OF REASON. NOAH IT IS SAID

TOOK OVER 100 YEARS TO BUILD THE ARK. WOULD WE REMAIN SO FAITHFUL AND STICK TO IT? **BY THE GRACE OF GOD WE CAN!!!!** THIS IS WHERE FAITH IN ACTIONS COMES.

NOT ONE OF OUR EXAMPLES OF THE “GIANTS” TODAY JUST SAT THERE AND LET THE WORLD GO BY!!!! WE NEED TO GET UP OFF THE FAITH WE ARE SITTING ON AND GO DO SOMETHING FOR GOD!!!! LIKE I SAID EARLIER, THE BIBLE IN ROMANS 12:3 TELLS US WE HAVE EACH, AND THAT MEANS YOU, THE GIFT OF FAITH – IT IS WHAT WE CHOOSE TO DO WITH IT THAT MATTERS.

I HAVE CONDUCTED A NUMBER OF FUNERALS AND IN A NUMBER OF THEM THE FAITH THE PERSON HAD LEFT US WITH A MEMORIAL, SOMETHING TO REMEMBER THEM BY. WHY? BECAUSE **THEIR FAITH WAS ACTIVE! REMEMBER OUR FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD, ARE WE LISTENING? BY HEARING THE WORD THEN WE ARE ABLE TO DO THE WORK OF GOD.**

THESE “GIANTS” OF FAITH IN HEBREWS HEARD GOD AND BY FAITH ACTED ON IT. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE HEARD GOD AND THE ANSWER BACK WAS “NOT NOW GOD”, I'M JUST TOO TIRED”, “I DON'T HAVE TIME”. ALL THESE “ANSWERS” CAN BE SUMMED UP IN THESE WORDS – IF SOMETHING IS A PRIORITY THEN WE SOMEHOW FIND THE TIME OR RESOURCES FOR IT!!! WHEN ARE WE GOING FIND TIME FOR GOD? HE HAS PROVIDED FOR US ALL OUR LIVES NO MATTER HOW SHORT OR LONG THAT TIME HAS BEEN. HOW LONG ARE WE GOING TO BE THE RECEIVER OF HIS BLESSINGS AND NOT GIVE OR BE THE BLESSING TO SOMEONE ELSE? **IT'S TIME TO WAKE FROM OUR SLUMBER AND AS THE GOSPEL TELLS US TO BE READY AND ALERT.**

FAITH IS A TRAIT OF GOD'S SERVANTS. FAITH IS THE OBJECT OF HOPE, LOVE AND PATIENCE. FAITH PROVES TO OUR MIND THE REALITY OF THE UNSEEN!!!

FAITH WILL BE TESTED!!! OH YES, **IT WILL BE TESTED – OVER AND OVER AGAIN.** ALL OF THE PEOPLE MENTIONED THIS MORNING AND MANY MORE, LIKE PEOPLE IN THIS CHURCH WILL TELL YOU WITH A NOD. IN I PETER THE FIRST CHAPTER “ AFTER TALKING ABOUT ENDURING TRIALS FOR A LITTLE WHILE *so that the authenticity of your faith—more precious than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with an inexpressible and glorious joy, now that you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls”*

FAITH IS BUILT ON A FOUNDATION AND THAT FOUNDATION IS JESUS CHRIST AS THE SONG SAYS “ALL ELSE IS SINKING SAND” FROM THE SONG “MY HOPE IS BUILT ON NOTHING LESS”.

BY FAITH – WE SERVE OTHERS, TAKING THE FOCUS OFF OURSELVES. BY FAITH WE ARE ABLE TO HAVE HOPE, SOMETHING MUCH OF THE WORLD LONGS FOR. THE QUESTION IS, WILL WE BE THEIR ANSWER?

THIS CHAPTER IN HEBREWS IS THE “FAITH” CHAPTER. THE “GIANTS” OF OUR FAITH ARE MENTIONED. **WE CAN BE “GIANTS” OF FAITH – TODAY – IF WE, LIKE THEM, ANSWER THE CALL OF GOD ON OUR LIFE.** AFTER ALL WE PROFESS IT IS OUR MISSION “TO MAKE CHRIST KNOWN IN THE COMMUNITY AND AROUND THE WORLD”, WE WILL **BY FAITH.** AMEN.