

The Walk of Faith

by C.I. Scofield

Faith is confidence in God and His Word, and it enables us to live a life of separation from the world and carnal believers, accomplish great things for God, and sustain in trial.

Scripture: Genesis 13:16, Romans 4:20, Hebrews 11:1-12, 1 John 5:14

Topics: "Faith And Works", "Christian Living"

Description

C.I. Scofield preaches on the importance of faith as a central principle in the Christian life, focusing on Hebrews 11 as the great faith chapter. He emphasizes that faith is experiential rather than merely doctrinal, illustrating how faith works through the lives of key figures like Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. Faith is portrayed as the channel through which divine power enters human life, sustaining believers in trials and enabling them to undertake great things for God.

Transcript

Every great truth of the Gospel has some special passage of Scripture devoted to its definition and elucidation. The thirteenth of 1 Corinthians is the love chapter; the fifteenth of 1 Corinthians the resurrection chapter; the fourteenth of Romans the justification chapter; the fourth of 1 Thessalonians the hope chapter, the eleventh of Hebrews is the faith chapter. Faith, hope, love, and justification, and resurrection are everywhere mentioned or implied, but in the chapters specified the Holy Spirit makes those words central. We are to look together this afternoon at the great faith chapter.

For one I am glad that faith is here taken up experimentally rather than doctrinally. Let me illustrate for a moment. Romans iii-iv is a great doctrinal passage; Romans vii, a great experimental passage. The Apostle in the latter does not give an essay on the believer's two natures. He does something far more vivid and intense: he tells us his own experience of the strife between the new man and the old man in terms of pain and even of agony.

So here we have not a disquisition on faith, after the manner of the theologians, but we have a succession of pictures showing what faith has done, and how it works as a dominant principle in the life that now is. Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and the other pattern men of faith pass before us as living illustrations of the faith principles.

It is not difficult to penetrate the writer's motive. He was writing to Hebrews who had at least professed faith in Christ, but who were in danger of lapsing back into Judaistic views of the importance of works. The

writer meets that tendency indirectly but powerfully by showing them all the great men of the Bible had been great not through works, but through faith--that faith was no new principle in the Gospel, but an old principle to which, in the Gospel, a universal application was given.

Let us then take up our chapter and learn from it how faith works in human lives.

First of all, then, note carefully that verse 1 is not a definition of faith, but a most precious as to the sphere in which faith works, and as to what it accomplishes in that sphere: "Now, faith is the giving substance to things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Evidently that statement, as I have pointed out, does not define faith. A phrase in 1 John v:14 gives the best definition of faith of which I have any knowledge: "and this is the confidence that we have in Him." Faith is confidence in God, and hence in God's word.

We cannot be too simple here. Faith may have secondary effects which react upon our feelings, but faith is not believing something because we "feel" that it is true, but because God says it is true. Let me be understood: I do not question, but rather affirm, that concerning matters of guidance in the daily path there is often a voice in the soul, but it is the Bible which points out the path, and the principles which must govern the life in that path. Abraham's faith is called "strong" in Romans iv:20, but what, after all, was that strong faith? He was "fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform." Faith demands a promise, a revelation, but bases upon that promise a "confidence in Him" which instantly makes the promised thing real.

When, as a child, my earthly father promised me anything, so sure was I of my father's integrity, of his loyalty to his word, that the thing promised had "substance."

Note now the sphere within which faith lives and moves and has its being: "things hoped for"; "things not seen." The contrast is between things "seen" and things "unseen." And this, let me remind you very exactly defines the respective spheres of science and of faith. Science has to do with things seen. Within that sphere science has wrought marvels, and deserves all honor. But in the sphere of the unseen, in the arcanum of things at present invisible, science has no place and covers herself with folly when she intrudes there. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. ii:9).

It is in this sphere that faith walks erect, triumphant and with assured step. See how true this is.

The first use of faith, logically, is to get a sinner right with God, and that is the order here. "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" (Heb. xi:4). Here, as you know, were the only two possible forms of religion. Cain brought an offering which stood for the union of his toil and God's providence, but it expressed neither the guilt of sin nor the divine condemnation of that guilt. And all modern perversions of Christianity have that fatal defect; they are unbloody. They may talk beautifully about the character of Christ, and poetically about His death, but they have no answer of suffering under the divine justice to the guilt of sin.

And Abel had nothing but his "gifts." It was of the slain firstling of the flock that God testified, not of Abel's character, when He declared him "righteous." The first use of faith, then, is that by it sinful man brings to holy God the offering which the justice of God demands, and which His mercy has provided--"the Lamb of

God that taketh away the sin of the world."

And the very moment that is done, death, even physical death, is no longer a necessity. Enoch, who also had the testimony that he pleased God, was translated that he should not see death. "We shall not all sleep." The Lord may come at any moment, and if he does, not one of us will die. (1 Thess. iv:14-16; 1 Cor. xv:51, 52.)

Let us remember, too, that Enoch found faith a glorious thing to live by, as well. He "walked with God three hundred years," and only faith can walk with the Invisible.

The next instance, that of Noah, shows how faith concerning "things not seen as yet" instantly influences conduct. Mark the seven wonderful things in the old patriarch's faith.

1. The ground of his faith: "warned of God."
2. The sphere of his faith: "things not seen as yet."
3. The effect of his faith: "fear," that prudence which becomes sinful man with divine warning.
4. The activity of his faith: "he prepared an ark."
5. The result of his faith: "saved his house."
6. The testimony of his faith: "he condemned the world."
7. The reward of his faith: "righteousness."

There is a song, " 'Tis old time religion," and the refrain, " 'Tis good enough for me." Well, friends, there is old time salvation, which is better than religion, and I heartily add, " 'Tis good enough for me."

Faith, again, is the only principle upon which practical separation can be maintained. "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 should go." That call came to him in Ur of the Chaldees, and it demanded separation from all that mere nature holds most dear, but by faith he "obeyed."

In Abraham, as you know, is illustrated the twofold separation demanded of the obedient believer. In leaving Ur he illustrated separation from the world; in leaving Lot he illustrated that harder, more difficult separation from carnal believers. Lot was a justified man (2 Pet. ii:7) but he was sadly a vessel unto dishonor (2 Tim. ii:19-21).

It is faith, again, which gives character to the walk. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tents 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" (Heb. xi:9, 10). How loose he sat to things seen! Even to the very things which were his by promise. There was promised Abraham a twofold seed: "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth" (Gen. xiii:16); and, "Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him. So shall thy seed be." Instantly, Abraham's faith laid hold on the star-seed, the heavenly promise, and thenceforth a tent was good enough for the man who was looking for a city. Faith made that city more real to Abraham than the very mountains of Israel.

Mark once more that faith is the channel through which divine power enters human life. It was "through faith" that Sara received "strength to conceive seed." Oh, how necessary to-day is that faith which can "receive strength"!

Faith, once more, undertakes great things for God. "What should I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah and of David also, and of 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."

And here I challenge the hosts of doubt and of unbelief. What great thing for God or man was ever yet wrought by the atheist and the agnostic? Come, this is an old world; unbelief has had its innings for weary centuries--where is the record of its victories?

And, lastly, it is faith which sustains in trial. "Others were tortured not accepting deliverance." "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."

History, friends, bears no such record of every conceivable form of heroism as that which the heroes of faith have manifested. The soldier does his great exploits in the sight of thousands; at the most a soldier's death awaits him. Read the acta sanctorum, if you would know to what sublimities of heroism faith can inspire, under what extremity of suffering faith can sustain.

And yet, great as faith is in what, instrumentally, it effects, the blessed Object of faith, our adorable Lord is infinitely greater. There should be no chapter division at verse 40; for the Spirit could never leave us looking at mere faith. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus."

After all, who gives faith its potency?--Jesus, "the author of our faith"; and who insures the continuance of faith?-- Jesus, the "finisher of our faith." "Author and finisher!" Well, then, let us draw our faith from Him, not looking at our faith, but ever and only "unto Jesus."

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