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THE FAITH OF JESUS

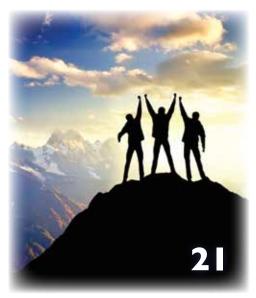
The Substance of Hope; the Evidence of the Unseen

Lessons From Abraham / The Faith of the Son of Man / The Hebrews 11 Victors



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"The age in which we live calls for reformatory action." - Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

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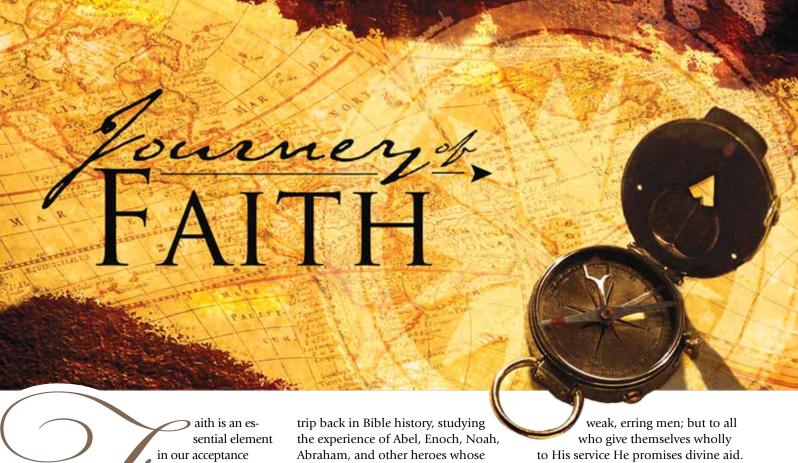
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before the Lord, in our justification, our sanctification, and our eternal life. That is the reason why Satan has worked hard to make confusion, creating a cheap imitation of this powerful weapon given by the Lord to His children.

The Bible reveals that we are "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1). More than that, Paul declares that "the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). And Hebrews 11 gives us a great list of faithful servants of God who gained victory over their enemies through faith.

James makes clear that there is a big difference between true faith—the faith that works by love and purifies the soul-and "dead faith" which is none other than a falsification of faith.

Christ is declared to be the "author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). We need to look to Him, considering His perfect life on the earth during His mission, His death on the cross in our stead. His resurrection. His intercession in our behalf in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, and His soon coming to this earth to take His faithful children to the eternal home.

In this issue of the Reformation Herald, our readers will make a wonderful lives are registered in the Holy Book as powerful inspiration to all of us who are living in these perilous times.

Faith is God's gift that is developed by studying His word and keeping a vital connection with the Lord by prayer and a life of obedience to His teachings.

Christ, besides being our Saviour, became our greatest pattern in faith. He also was an overcomer in our behalf though faith. He never neglected His communion with the Father.

"To the consecrated worker there is wonderful consolation in the knowledge that even Christ during His life on earth sought His Father daily for fresh supplies of needed grace; and from this communion with God He went forth to strengthen and bless others. Behold the Son of God bowed in prayer to His Father. Though He is the Son of God, He strengthens His faith by prayer, and by communion with heaven gathers to Himself power to resist evil and to minister to the needs of men. As the Elder Brother of our race He knows the necessities of those who, compassed with infirmity and living in a world of sin and temptation, still desire to serve Him. He knows that the messengers whom He sees fit to send are

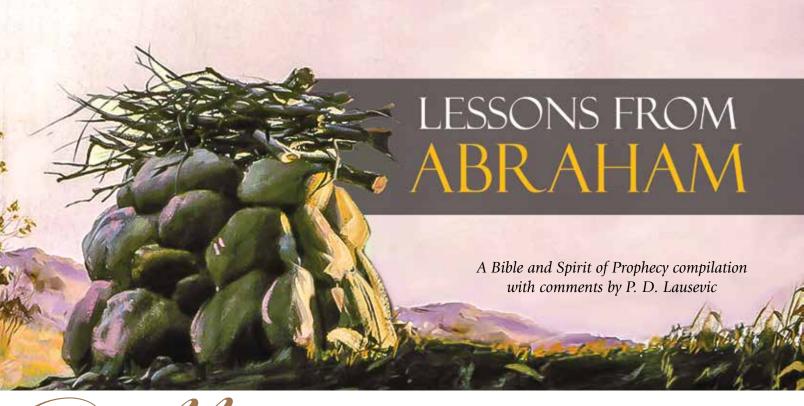
His own example is an assurance that earnest, persevering supplication to God in faith—faith that leads to entire dependence upon God, and unreserved consecration to His work—will avail to bring to men the Holy Spirit's aid in the battle against sin."1

Especially now, when our Intercessor is almost finishing His work in the heavenly sanctuary, we need to keep looking to Him as our only hope in this life and the life to come.

Difficult times are ahead of us, and we need a strong faith today to face the future. Habakkuk gives a vision of the crisis that God's people will overcome before the second coming of Christ.

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places" (3:17-19). \mathcal{R}

¹ The Acts of the Apostles, p. 56.



artin
Luther,
in search
of his

lifelong desire to be at peace with God, was climbing "Pilate's staircase" on his knees, when a voice like thunder seemed to say to him, "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH" (Romans 1:17, emphasis added).

Why is faith so important? Why do we need to understand what faith is and to try to live by it? "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4, emphasis supplied). The reason why we desperately need faith is because it is the entity that gives us victory over this world.

What actually is this faith?

There are two types of "faith"

- 1. Faith that produces victory.
- 2. A belief that is to some degree similar to faith that produces trembling. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the **devils also believe**, and tremble" (James 2:19, emphasis supplied).

This second kind of "faith" is not really faith; it is called belief here.

Although sometimes the scriptures use faith and belief interchangeably, there is a wide difference between the two. It's important to believe that there is one God—very important. You are doing well to believe in one God. It is a good start but according to this Scripture, that is not enough.

When you come to the point in your life at which you believe that God exists, you have only gotten as far as the devil has gotten, and his belief will never save him. That type of belief does not produce victory over the world but, rather, causes a person to unite with the world.

What about Abraham's faith?

Was the faith of Abraham victorious? We read that "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Galatians 3:6–9, emphasis supplied).

We read here that the children of Abraham have faith—real, genuine

faith—and the blessings promised to him belong to them. Just as the "father" of western medicine was Hippocrates and the "father" of a system to distribute electricity was Edison—because of the influence they carried as a result of their discovery of how their particular specialty worked—likewise can Abraham be considered the "father" of faith. Just as Edison's discovery made electricity available to us, so did Abraham's closer relationship with God render faith more practical and understandable in order for us to have victory over the world.

The father of the genuinely faithful

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1–3).

What does God tell Abraham? "Get out"—leave, depart, separate. Why was this necessary? Abraham was essentially being told, "Come out from among

them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17, emphasis added). Why is this so important?

"It is the duty of every child of God to inquire: 'Wherein am I separate from the world?' Let us suffer a little inconvenience and be on the safe side." 1

"Christ's followers are required to come out from the world, and be separate, and touch not the unclean, and they have the promise of being the sons and daughters of the Most High, members of the royal family. But if the conditions are not complied with on their part, they will not, cannot, realize the fulfillment of the promise."²

Why does God require them to be separate? What is the problem with intimately joining in the festivities of the world? Look at the experience of Samson. "At his marriage feast Samson was brought into familiar association with those who hated the God of Israel. Whoever voluntarily enters into such relations will feel it necessary to conform, to some degree, to the habits and customs of his companions. The time thus spent is worse than wasted. Thoughts are entertained and words are spoken that tend to break down the strongholds of principle and to weaken the citadel of the soul."3

Let us evaluate the things Abraham was to separate from?

1. "GET THEE OUT OF THY COUNTRY."

Abraham was going to be a stranger, and all who would separate with him would be strangers in a strange land. What happens to national barriers among the followers of faithful Abraham? Will they exist among those who separate with him?

The Lord's messenger relates her experience when visiting Europe: "So many say that the different nationalities . . . were peculiar and had to be reached in a certain way. . . . Let the Lord take possession of the mind and mold it as the clay is molded in the hands of the potter, and these differences will not exist. Look to Jesus, brethren; copy His manners and spirit, and you will have no trouble in reach-

ing these different classes. We have not six patterns to follow, nor five; we have only one, and that is Christ Jesus. If the Italian brethren, the French brethren, and the German brethren try to be like Him, they will plant their feet upon the same foundation of truth; the same spirit that dwells in one will dwell in the other-Christ in them, the hope of glory. I warn you, brethren and sisters, not to build up a wall of partition between different nationalities. On the contrary, seek to break it down wherever it exists. We should endeavor to bring all into the harmony that there is in Jesus, laboring for the one object, the salvation of our fellow men."4

2. SEPARATE "FROM THY KINDRED, AND FROM THY FATHER'S HOUSE"

What happens to our family associations? "In order that God might qualify him for his great work as the keeper of the sacred oracles, Abraham must be separated from the associations of his early life. The influence of kindred and friends would interfere with the training which the Lord purposed to give His servant. Now that Abraham was, in a special sense, connected with heaven, he must dwell among strangers. His character must be peculiar, differing from all the world. He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and his motives and actions were not comprehended by his idolatrous kindred."5

What was the main reason for this separation from close family members and lifelong friends? Was it in order to avoid being wrongly influenced by them? Have you ever found it difficult to explain your course of action even to your dearest friends—those who were such prior to your conversion? Why is this the case? "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Ur was one of the lushest areas of the world at that time. Fertile land; a place where one could amass wealth easily. And God tells Abraham, "Go away from here. And I'm going to show where

you're going to go when you get there."

What does Abraham do with such a command? He begins packing his bags.

Friends may ask, "Where are you going?"

"God will show me."

"What is the land like?"

"I don't know."

"Is it a wilderness?"

"I don't know."

We read that "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 went**" (Hebrews 11:8, emphasis added).

"It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. . . . The happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be." 6

God often calls us to leave family and friends for His service. We may consider it a very difficult sacrifice, but it is the very thing that we need.

Are you searching for happiness? Happiness is not found in the change of environment—although it may help at times—or in a marriage, or divorce. The only way to find happiness is to be where God would have us to be. Does God ask us to leave those dear to us for the sake of His cause as he called Abraham?

"Many are still tested as was Abraham. They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from the heavens, but He calls them by the teachings of His word and the events of His providence. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations, and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do: but a life of ease and the influence of friends and kindred would hinder the development of the very traits essential for its accomplishment. He calls them away from human influences and aid, and leads them to feel the need of His help,

and to depend upon Him alone, that He may reveal Himself to them. Who is ready at the call of Providence to renounce cherished plans and familiar associations? Who will accept new duties and enter untried fields, doing God's work with firm and willing heart, for Christ's sake counting his losses gain? He who will do this has the faith of Abraham."

Busy, industrious people recruited!

We're often inclined to call into the Lord's work people who have nothing else to do. But when did Christ call the disciples? He called Matthew when

business was great, when he had to sacrifice to enter the gospel work. "Matthew 'left all, rose up, and followed [Jesus].' There was no hesitation, no questioning, no thought of the lucrative business to be exchanged for poverty and hardship. It was enough for him that he was to be with Jesus, that he might listen to His words and unite with Him in His work."8

The disciples went fishing and caught the biggest catch of their lives. It was then that Jesus said, "Now, I'll make you fishers of men." "To Matthew in his wealth, and to Andrew and Peter in their poverty, the same test was brought; the same consecration was made by each. At the moment of success, when the nets were filled with fish,

and the impulses of the old life were strongest, Jesus asked the disciples at the sea to leave all for the work of the gospel. So every soul is tested as to whether the desire for temporal good or for fellowship with Christ is strongest."9

I'll never forget my own experience. I had finished missionary school and started college. I had plans where I

would go from there—and that point my uncle offered me a job. I was 18 years old. He offered a partnership in his business, guaranteeing \$40,000 the first year—an amount that could buy a house at that time and have some left over. That was my first test. I could not accept because he wasn't a believer. I had to leave that behind.

I then went to Los Angeles and learned to build. While in construction I was just about to begin my apprenticeship in tile setting while also going to university. Another uncle offered me this apprenticeship and offered for me to then take over one of his companies.



This particular uncle was a believer, so I accepted the opportunity. It was just when I had accepted that position and was preparing for the next semester at university that God called me to full-time gospel work. God asked me to go, I went—and I don't regret it; but I still remember that time of struggle when the call came.

But this is what God expects from

every one of us—to do the greatest amount of good possible. He may ask you to abandon a career—or whatever—that you might be able to render more thorough service to Him.

Led by God's word

When Abraham went out by faith, was this acting only on the basis of some impression he had received? No, it was not a mere impression. Some people "follow impressions and claim to be taught of the Spirit; and like the fanatics that troubled Luther, they place these impressions above the written word of God, while they trample upon

the divine law because their hearts are not in harmony with its precepts."¹⁰

Was Abraham's departure based upon feeling? "Feeling has nothing to do with faith. That faith which works by love and purifies the soul is not a matter of impulse. It ventures out upon the promises of God, firmly believing that what He has said, He is able also to perform. Our souls may be trained to believe, taught to rely upon the Word of **God**. That Word declares that 'the just shall live by faith' (Romans 1:17), not by feeling."11

Abraham's action was not emotional. As a matter of fact, it was contrary to feeling and emotion. It was based solely on one thing, and one thing alone—God's Word. The Lord said, "Abraham, go." He recognized that word and went.

What kind of questions did Abraham have for God?

"Abraham's unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. To him, faith was 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' (Hebrews 11:1). Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went

forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead."12

The devils believe and tremble, but Abraham had more: He had faith that justifies.

"Faith is the only condition upon which justification can be obtained, and faith includes not only belief but trust."¹³

"The faith that accepts Christ as One who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him, means perfect belief and trust. To be intelligently convinced is not enough. [James 2:19 quoted.] Many there are who believe that Christ has died for the sins of the world, but they make no appropriation of this grand truth to their own souls. Their hearts are not enlisted in the service of God, their lives are not reformed. Their lives are not sanctified by the truth they profess to believe." 14

Abraham, on the other hand, revealed his faith by his works—offering up Isaac by faith. He believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. (James 2:21–23.)

The principle of separation

God is telling us to separate from something. Separate from what? We often tell people to come out of Babylon, and of course we want to come out, too. Yet how often do we bring Babylon along with us? What are we missing out on experiencing when we keep our attachments with Babylonish things? "Before giving us the baptism of the Holy Spirit, our heavenly Father will try us, to see if we can live without dishonoring Him." 15

God's work in Abraham's life was progressive. Consider his frailty when he said Sarah was his sister—and the conception of Ishmael through Hagar. But he eventually regained his first love when he was willing to obey just because God said so. Because he regained that experience, God permitted another test to come his way. This time it was a test of his love for Isaac, his miraclechild, to reveal whether that love was greater than his love for the Creator.

When we read that he was tempted, what exactly does that mean? "What is temptation—It is the means by which those who claim to be the children of God are tested and tried. We read that

God tempted Abraham, that He tempted the children of Israel. This means that He permitted circumstances to occur to test their faith, and lead them to look to Him for help. God permits temptation to come to His people today, that they may realize that He is their helper."¹⁶

What made this man to willingly offer up everything dearest in his life to God? "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac" (Hebrews 11:17). This trial was more severe than that which had come upon Adam. Because of Abraham's loving, willing obedience to God, he actually was willing to surrender the son of promise to be a burnt offering—and, the amazing thing is, that Isaac was willing to comply with the idea. Why? What was their hope? Were they looking forward to the ashes that would remain?

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (verses 17–19, emphasis supplied).

Yes, in his old age, Abraham truly believed in the power of God. This genuine faith in the Word of God could look beyond the present, beyond what things looked like—by trusting His Word and acting on that Word.

The Lord's messenger to our generation warns: "From what was shown me, but a small number of those now professing to believe the truth would eventually be saved—not because they could not be saved, but because they would not be saved in God's own appointed way. The way marked out by our divine Lord is too narrow and the gate too strait to admit them while grasping the world or while cherishing selfishness or sin of any kind. There is no room for these things; and yet there are but few who will consent to part with them, that they may pass the narrow way and enter the strait gate."17

An appeal to each of us

The other day I was at the bedside of a dying minister, Neville S. Brittain, as he spent his final conscious hours at the Palliative Care unit at Mount Druitt Hospital. It would be the last time that I spoke to him before he lapsed into unconsciousness and his final rest before that special resurrection. As he was laboring with his breathing, and taking longer than usual rests between sentences, his last thoughts were about the condition of the professed people of God. Are we truly ready to give up everything for the sake of eternity? Are we ready to truly come out and be a separate and distinct people, to truly have the experience of faithful Abraham?

What have you been doing in your life? Are you going to base your faith and evidences upon the Word of God and the Word of God alone? Or are you basing them upon feelings; upon friends; upon relatives; upon prejudice; upon what our forefathers have done? Upon what are you going to base your faith?

Faith means:

"I'm going to believe God's Word, and I'm going to trust in this Word.

"I'm going to trust in it whether my spouse does or does not; or

"I'm going to trust in it whether my friends do or do not.

"I'm going to have my trust right here."

Is this your experience today? *References*

- ¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 278. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ² Ibid., vol. 2, p. 441. [Emphasis supplied.]
 ³ Patriarche and Prophate p. 563. [Emphasis
- ³ Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 563. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁴ Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 181. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁵ Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 126. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁶ Ibid. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁷ Ibid., pp. 126, 127. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁸ The Desire of Ages, p. 273. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁹ Ibid. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹⁰ The Signs of the Times, February 26, 1885.
- ¹¹ *Mind, Character, and Personality,* vol. 2, p. 537. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹² Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 126. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹³ Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 389. [Emphasis supplied.]
- $^{14}\, The \,\, Youth's \,\, Instructor, \,\, March \,\, 1, \, 1900.$
- ¹⁵ Selected Messages, vol. 3, pp. 426, 427.
- ¹⁶ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1094.
- ¹⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 445, 446. [Emphasis supplied.]

THE SONS OF acob A compilation from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, with comments by B. Montrose

acob the imposter; Jacob the liar.
From childhood we have all heard the almost humorously outrageous story of how Jacob, in his tremendous zeal for the birthright promised to him, stooped to deception to grab it. (Genesis chapter 27.)

But in reality, isn't Jacob's frailty a symbol of us all? Who among us has never sinned and come short of the glory of God?

We readily forgive Jacob because, after all, deep-down, he was desperate to obtain the birthright not for material gain but because of the spiritual blessing attached to it. He was determined to persevere with God until he became an overcomer that ultimately was to fervently plead with the Lord, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Genesis 32:26).

God knew Jacob's life, He understood the heart struggles of the patriarch, He had tenderly watched over His servant throughout the many trials he had undergone. So, certainly the blessed reassurance given to him came as music to the ears: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Verse 28).

No more the supplanter; by faith Jacob was now the overcomer. Wouldn't you love to receive such a joyful verdict from your King and Judge?

Yes—despite Jacob's frailty, he and the nation called by his name nonetheless symbolize a victorious Christian experience.

The prophet Micah prophesied in prayer to God, "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (7:20, emphasis supplied).

The prophet Jeremiah declares, "Fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy

seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished" (46:27, 28, emphasis supplied).

The Majesty of Heaven is even referred to as Jacob's God: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (Psalm 46:11, emphasis supplied).

This connection with Jacob is especially applicable in the prophecies of God's remnant people in the last days:

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed

thee with the heritage of **Jacob** thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isaiah 58:13, 14, emphasis supplied).

"As the members of the body of Christ approach the period of their last conflict, 'the time of Jacob's trouble,' they will grow up into Christ, and will partake largely of His Spirit. As the third message swells to a loud cry, and as great power and glory attend the closing work, the faithful people of God will partake of that glory." 1

But what precedes this glorious victory?

The modern-day servant of the Lord de-

scribes how she was shown the anguish of God's people during the time of Jacob's trouble:

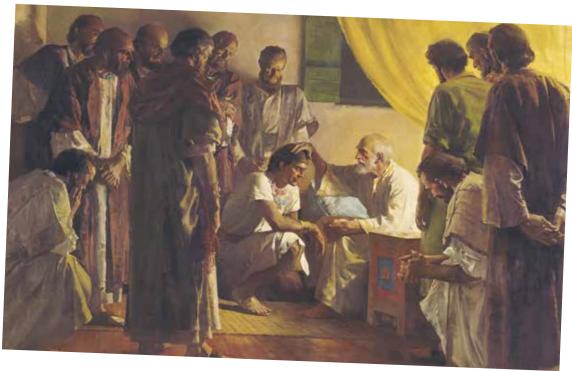
"On every hand they hear the plottings of treason and see the active working of rebellion; and there is aroused within them an intense desire, an earnest yearning of soul, that this great apostasy may be terminated and the wickedness of the wicked may come to an end. But while they plead with God to stay the work of rebellion, it is with a keen sense of self-reproach that they themselves have no more power to resist and urge back the mighty tide of evil. They feel that had they always employed all their ability in the service of Christ, going forward from strength to strength, Satan's forces would have less power to prevail against them.

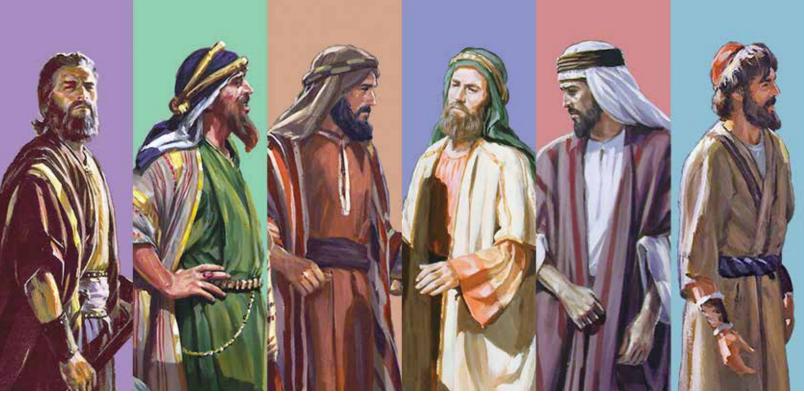
"They afflict their souls before God, pointing to their past repentance of their many sins, and pleading the Saviour's promise, 'Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me' (Isaiah 27:5). Their faith does not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered.

Though suffering the keenest anxiety, terror, and distress, they do not cease their intercessions. They lay hold of the strength of God as Jacob laid hold of the Angel; and the language of their souls is, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me' (Genesis 32:26).

"Had not Jacob previously repented of his sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, God would not have heard his prayer and mercifully preserved his life. So, in the time of trouble, if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance. But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone beforehand to judgment and have been blotted out; and they cannot bring them to remembrance.

"Satan leads many to believe that God will overlook their unfaithfulness in the minor affairs of life; but the Lord shows in His dealings with Jacob that He will in no wise sanction or tolerate evil. All who endeavor to excuse or





conceal their sins, and permit them to remain upon the books of heaven, unconfessed and unforgiven, will be overcome by Satan. The more exalted their profession and the more honorable the position which they hold, the more grievous is their course in the sight of God and the more sure the triumph of their great adversary. Those who delay a preparation for the day of God cannot obtain it in the time of trouble or at any subsequent time. The case of all such is hopeless."²

Clearly we must prepare for that time—and now is our hour of opportunity.

Overcoming our evil traits

All of us have inherited evil traits from many generations—those that seem to be somewhat beyond our control. But, like the sons of Jacob, we nevertheless have a duty to resist those traits and conquer them through the power of Christ. We also have some problems that are more directly our own fault—cultivated tendencies to evil, wrong habits that have crept in, and sinful propensities cherished. How can these be conquered? Also through the strength of Christ. Let us see how the sons of Jacob overcame them:

Reuben

Compared to Jacob's other sons, Reuben might have been considered the "nicest." When the brothers conspired to murder young Joseph, we read that Reuben suggested that he be cast into a pit (with the secret intention to rescue him later). He was deeply grieved at the horrible action his brothers were taking.

But later, as the company was traveling to Ephrath, this firstborn son of Jacob committed the heinous crime of adultery with his father's concubine—a sin which cost him the birthright.

No more the supplanter; by faith Jacob was now the overcomer. Wouldn't you love to receive such a joyful verdict from your King and Judge? Violation of the seventh commandment strikes hard against the Godordained unit of society—the nuclear family. This is associated with a lack of stability, so the verdict was made against Reuben: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel" (Genesis 49:4). "Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away" (Proverbs 6:32, 33). This sin indeed has long-term consequences—much more so than people realize, especially in today's age of licentiousness. But are such cases hopeless? Let us read what the messenger of the Lord wrote to an unstable young man:

"Your own instability leads you to doubt the sincerity of those who would do you good. The more you struggle in doubt, the more unreal everything looks to you, until it seems that there is no solid ground for you anywhere. Your promises are like ropes of sand, and you regard in the same unreal light the words and works of those in whom you should trust.

"You will be in constant peril until you understand the true force of the will. You may believe and promise all things, but your promises or your faith are of no value until you put your will



on the side of faith and action. If you fight the fight of faith with all your will power, you will conquer."³

Simeon

"In the cruel treatment of their brother [Joseph], Simeon had been the instigator and chief actor."⁴

That one statement says a lot about the nature of Simeon. If you happen to have this characteristic, what should you consider?

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

With God's help, to control one's fury need not be an impossible task. "You need to work with the utmost diligence to control self and develop a character in harmony with the principles of the word of God. You need to educate and train yourself in order to become a successful shepherd. You need to cultivate a good temper—kindly, cheerful, buoyant, generous, pitiful, courteous, compassionate traits of character. You should overcome a morose, bigoted, narrow, faultfinding, overbearing spirit. If you are connected with the work of God you need to battle with yourself vigorously and form your character after the divine Model."5

Levi

"Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. . . . Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:5. 7).

Some friends are better apart than together. The chemistry between Simeon and Levi was such that somehow they brought out the worst in each other. Do you have friends like that? If so, stay away!

"Of the sons of Jacob, Levi was one of the most cruel and vindictive, one of the two most guilty in the treacherous murder of the Shechemites. Levi's characteristics, reflected in his descendants, incurred for them the decree from God, 'I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel' (Genesis 49:7). But repentance wrought reformation; and by their faithfulness to God amidst

the apostasy of the other tribes, the curse was transformed into a token of highest honor.

"The Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto him, and to bless in his name' (Deuteronomy 10:8)."

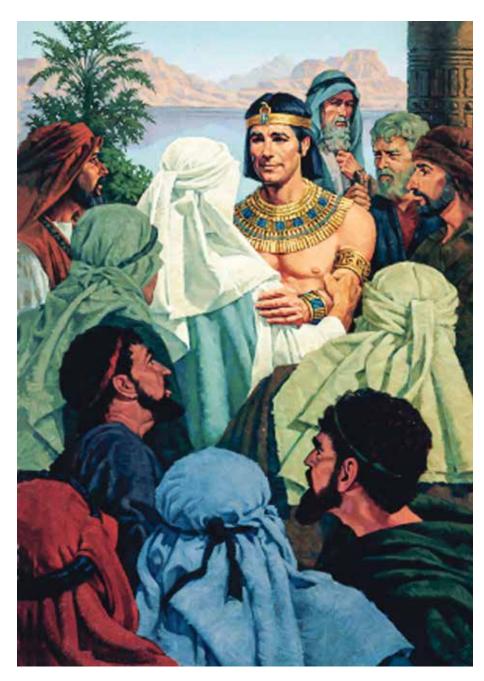
Judah

In Genesis chapters 37 and 38 we see how Judah was likely plagued with remorse over the sin against Joseph. Yet this tribe is first among the list of overcomers in Revelation 7:5.

The two sons of Bilhah

Naphtali was described as "a hind let loose" (Genesis 49:21), as one who timidly flees from danger and burdens. Yet, "what a thought that God chooses a man and brings him into close connection with Himself, and gives him a mission to undertake, a work to do,

All of us have inherited and cultivated evil traits. But, like the sons of Jacob, we have a duty to resist those traits and conquer them through the power of Christ.



for Him. A weak man is made strong, a timid man is made brave."7

On the other hand, we do not see the tribe of Dan, the other son of Bilhah, on the list of overcomers. In Bible history we get the picture that this tribe was characterized by backbiting (Genesis 49:17). Though a person may be intelligent and skillful (Judges 18:1, 2, 26–30; 2 Chronicles 2:1, 11–14), the habit of giving loose rein to an unregenerate tongue will keep any tribe or individual out of the kingdom of God. Of the seven things in Proverbs 6:16–19 that are listed as abominations to the Lord, most

pertain to speech. Like the psalmist, we all must pray, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3). We are to "speak evil of no man" (Titus 3:2).

"We must now be terribly in earnest. We have not a moment to spend in criticism and accusation. Let those who have done this in the past fall on their knees in prayer, and let them beware how they put their words and their plans in the place of God's words and God's plans."8

The two sons of Zilpah

Like the other sons of Jacob, Gad was born in a spirit of rivalry. At his

birth, Leah triumphantly declared, "A troop cometh" (Genesis 30:11). We are warned about the spirit of rivalry—that "if this spirit is indulged, it will grow and strengthen, and will crowd out the missionary spirit. It will grieve the Spirit of God and will banish . . . the ministering angels sent to be coworkers with those who cherish the grace of God."9 So, what is the remedy? "Those who are true to their calling as messengers for God will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ. No rivalry will mar the precious cause of the gospel."10

The second son of Zilpah, Asher, was said to "yield royal dainties," (Genesis 49:20), one to "dip his foot in oil" (Deuteronomy 33:24), smoothing the path of light. In the unconverted soul, this characteristic could result in flattery or smooth sayings. The servant of the Lord warns in anguish of spirit:

"The sermons preached by some of our ministers will have to be much more powerful than they are now, or many backsliders will carry a tame, pointless message, which lulls people to sleep. Every discourse should be given under a sense of the awful judgments soon to fall on the world. The message of truth is to be proclaimed by lips touched with a live coal from the divine altar.

"My heart is filled with anguish when I think of the tame messages borne by some of our ministers, when they have a message of life and death to bear. The ministers are asleep; the lay members are asleep; and a world is perishing in sin. May God help His people to arouse and walk and work as men and women on the borders of the eternal world. Soon an awful surprise is coming upon the inhabitants of the world. Suddenly, with power and great glory, Christ will come. Then there will be no time to prepare to meet Him. Now is the time for us to give the warning message."11

Issachar

Issachar was the burden bearer, possibly too much of one. Trying to bear double or triple burdens can sometimes mean overload—which can

There is hope for every one of us if we will trust in the power of the Saviour. We must cooperate with the workings of His Holy Spirit until we become victors through His mercy and strength.

actually decrease our efficiency in the Lord's service. Discernment and single-minded determination are needed in order to be an overcomer.

Zebulon

This tribe is characterized by writing and by dwelling in coastal regions. The tribe distinguished itself together with the tribe of Naphtali as "a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field" (Judges 5:18). These qualities, dedicated to the service of God, can strengthen missionary efforts performed in these last days.

Joseph

Revelation 7's "hall of fame"—that list of tribes (or character-types) that overcome to receive the seal of God's approval—includes the name of Joseph.

The scriptures generally give a glowing report about Joseph. Yet, like everyone else, he also had some overcoming to do. Referring to the great crisis of his life when he was sold into slavery, we read, "One day's experience had been the turning point in Joseph's life. Its terrible calamity had transformed him from a petted child to a man, thoughtful, courageous, and self-possessed." 12

Yes, all petted children need to grow to maturity. If they have been overindulged, in the long run they will suffer. This is something that parents and grandparents need to keep in mind in guiding the young.

Benjamin

The ravenous wolf (Genesis 49:27; Judges 20:4, 5, 12–14, 23, 46; 21:1–4, 13–15) needs to be transformed into a lamb. Yet a favorable prophecy has

been made regarding the outcome of this tribe: Deuteronomy 33:12.

Hope for the hopeless

Regardless of the tribe to which we may belong, there is hope for every one of us if we will trust in the power of the Saviour to lead us through to the end. We must cooperate with the workings of His Holy Spirit until we become victors through His mercy and strength. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

In his latter years, Jacob testified "that his years had been few and evil; that is, he had seen much trouble, and suffered much perplexity, which had cut short his years. The life of Jacob had not been smooth and peaceful. The jealousy of his wives had brought a train of evils. Some of his children had grieved him and made his life very bitter. But the last years of Jacob's life were more peaceful. **His sons had reformed**."¹³

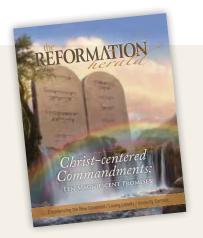
With God's help: Reformed! The same chance is also being offered to us! "Those who come into sacred relation with the God of heaven are not left to the natural weakness and infirmity of their natures. They are invited by the Saviour: 'Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me' (Isaiah 27:5). The righteousness of Christ is imputed unto them, and He gives them power to become sons of God. The world loses all attraction for them; for they seek a better country, an eternal world, a life that is to continue through never-ending ages. This is the theme of their thought and conversa-

"You can show to the world that there is power in the religion of Christ. Jesus will help those who seek Him with all their hearts, to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil."14

May the Lord help each of us—like the sons of Jacob, to become Israel, the final remnant of overcomers, through the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. (Revelation 12:11.) Amen.

References

- ¹ The Review and Herald, May 27, 1862. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ² The Great Controversy, pp. 619, 620.
- ³ Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 513.
- ⁴ Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 226.
- ⁵ Testimonies, vol. 3, pp. 420, 421.
- ⁶ Education, p. 148.
- ⁷ Selected Messages, bk. 2, p. 167.
- 8 Testimonies, vol. 8, p. 36.
- ⁹ Ibid., vol. 7, pp. 173, 174.
- ¹⁰ The Desire of Ages, p. 179.
- ¹¹ Testimonies, vol. 8, pp. 36, 37.
- ¹² Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 214.
- ¹³ The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 1, p. 154. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹⁴ The Review and Herald, September 16, 1890.



Like What You See?

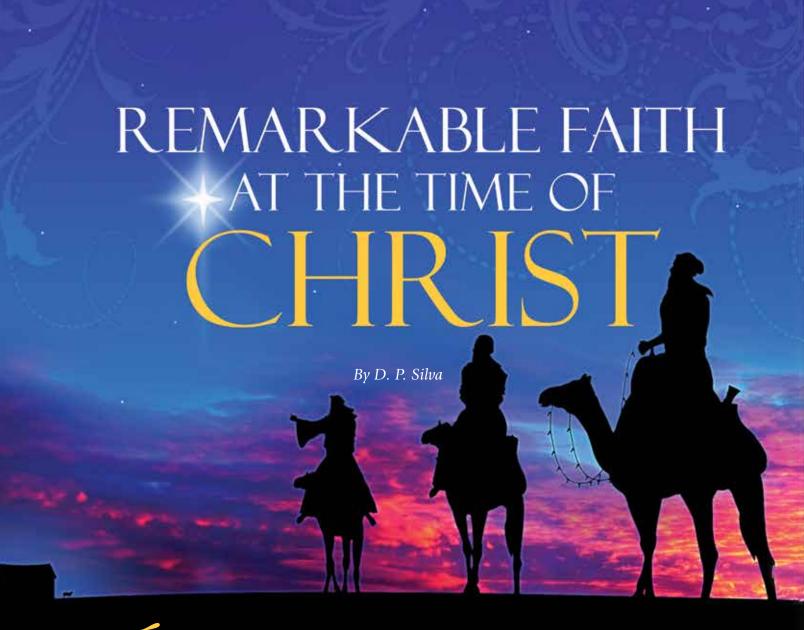
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n the book of
Hebrews, we find a long
list of names of faithful believers who became known
as heroes of faith. Indeed, these
children of God faced tremendous challenges in their process of being sure "of
things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1).

Let us take into consideration that faith is an essential element in our relationship with the Creator. "Without faith no one can please God. Anyone who comes to God must believe that he is real and that he rewards those who truly want to find him" Hebrews 11:6 (New Century Version). "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). Considering the other side of the coin, if I go to the Lord but I don't believe that He is real, I am just a "pretend" worshipper.

We would not like to be mere pretenders, for sure, so let us boost our faith by considering some beautiful examples of faith from the time when Jesus lived as the Son of man on earth.

The wise men from the east

After the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to visit with Him. This noble group was made up of philosophers who would study the sky, having access to the prophecies of Balaam describing the coming of the King of Israel. One of the prophecies talked about a star connected with a scepter. Said the prophet: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab,

and destroy all the children of Sheth" (Numbers 24:17, emphasis supplied).

These wise men saw from a distance the angels of God on the night of the birth of Christ appearing to some shepherds who expected the coming Messiah. While the shepherds were considering the promises of the coming Deliverer, the angel of the Lord, appeared to them, saying: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:10-14).

To the wise men from the East, that multitude of angels appeared as a bright star. They connected the star with the prophecy of Balaam, and God gave them light to understand that the Divine King was coming.

Immediately, they started their journey by following the star. Arriving at Jerusalem, the star disappeared and they were directed to Herod and the Jewish leaders to ask about the newborn King. These travelers were greatly surprised with the indifference the priests manifested upon hearing such wonderful news.

Leaving Jerusalem, the star reappeared before them and directed them to Bethlehem, where they found Jesus.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, they recognized in the helpless, newborn baby, the Majesty of Heaven. And they worshipped Him, offering the best gifts appropriate for a King. In spite of the outward appearance of Jesus and His earthly parents—poor peasants from Nazareth—they could see the promised King.

The centurion

Matthew chapter 8, verses 5–13, brings a remarkable testimony of faith revealed by another person who did not belong to the professed people of God.

A Roman centurion came to Jesus in Capernaum with a special request: "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented" (verse 6). Jesus answered promptly: "I will come and heal him" (verse 7).

Observe carefully the declaration of the faith of the centurion: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it" (verses 8 and 9).

The Roman officer first declared that he was not worthy for Jesus to enter under his roof. At the same time, in spite of his unworthiness, he strongly believed that Jesus had power and willingness to heal his servant with just one word uttered from a great distance. And he used that very simple

reasoning, comparing the submission of disease to the command of Jesus to himself obeying the orders of his superiors, and his soldiers obeying his words of command. He declared with full assurance: "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

Christ publicly commended the faith of the Roman officer, saying: "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (verses 10–12).

What Christ is saying is that those who fully trust in Him as their Lord



and Saviour will be in the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, in spite of professing to believe the truth or professing to be part of God's people, those who do not believe in Christ will be outside of the kingdom.

If we compare the revelation of the faith of the centurion with other people of Israel, we can see how great was this man's trust in Christ.

Many years before, when God commanded Gideon to lead His people against the Midianites, the Amalekites, and other peoples from the East, the man of God requested some special signs. When addressing the nobleman at Capernaum whose son was almost dying, Christ had said with sadness: "Except ye see sign and wonders ye will not believe" (John 4:48). But this centurion was different; he didn't ask for any kind of sign. He simply believed that Christ had power to heal his servant in spite of the distance.

When Naaman, the captain of the Syrian army, had been told that the prophet Elisha could heal him from leprosy, he expected that the man of God would come and touch his body with his hands to restore his health. So, when the prophet sent him a message that to be healed he needed to dip himself in the Jordan River seven times, the Syrian captain became highly offended. But this centurion said to Christ: "Just say the word, and my servant will be healed."

Christ really rejoiced with the faith of this Roman officer. While many of His own people rejected Him in spite of so many signs and wonders, this man from a pagan nation revealed full confidence in the Saviour.

"And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour" (verse 13).

"The centurion said of himself, 'I am not worthy.' His heart had been touched by the grace of Christ. He saw his own unworthiness; yet he feared not to ask help. He trusted not to his own goodness; his argument was his great need. His faith took hold upon Christ in His true character. He did not believe in Him merely as a worker of miracles, but as the friend and Saviour of mankind.

"It is thus that every sinner may come to Christ. 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us' (Titus 3:5). When Satan tells you that you are a sinner, and cannot hope to receive blessing from God, tell him that Christ came into the world to save sinners. We have nothing to recommend us to God; but the plea that we may urge now and ever is our utterly helpless condition that makes His redeeming power a necessity. Renouncing all self-dependence, we may look to the cross of Calvary and say—'In my



hand no price I bring; Simply to Thy cross I cling.'"1

The woman having an issue of blood

Dr. Luke, the "beloved physician," brings another great fact of faith:

"A woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind [Jesus], and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" (Luke 8:43-48).

This lady had been suffering for many long years. She had tried every available resource to recover from her disease. She had visited the doctors and spent all her means just to be disappointed and be told that her health problem was incurable. She had lost all hope in human help.

Then she heard about Jesus. She had never walked with the Saviour nor had any personal contact with Him. However, what she heard was enough to create a strong faith in the wonderful Physician.

Trying to reach Christ, she made great efforts to enter into His presence. She did her best to press her way through the crowd in the hopes of getting a chance to speak with the Master, to explain her health problem, and to ask for healing. But since Christ was always sur-

rounded by such a huge crowd, the expected dialogue didn't happen.

Finally, she was able at least to get close to where the Saviour was. It was her golden opportunity. She decided: "If I just touch His garment, I will be healed." Concentrating all her faith in that one touch, she felt the power of Christ radiate throughout her body. She was made whole.

Christ could discern the great difference between the casual touch of the multitude and that touch of faith. And He invited the woman to testify of the blessing she had received from that contact. Jesus had another purpose in making public that experience. He desired to give her eternal salvation, not just to heal her physically. He said to her: "Thy faith hath made you whole. Go in peace."

"When the suffering woman put forth her hand to touch Him, believing that she would be made whole, she felt the healing virtue. So in spiritual things. To talk of religion in a casual way, to pray without soul hunger and living faith, avails nothing. A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Saviour of the world, can never bring healing to the soul. The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. He who waits for entire knowledge before he will exercise faith cannot receive blessing from God. It is not enough to believe about Christ; we must believe in Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a

transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power."²

How deep is our faith?

God's true remnant people are recognized as those who possess the patience of the saints, "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

What is the "faith of Jesus" mentioned by John in Revelation?

" 'The faith of Jesus.' It is talked of but not understood. What constitutes the faith of Jesus, that belongs to the third angel's message? Jesus becoming our sin-bearer that He might become our sin-pardoning Saviour. He was treated as we deserve to be treated. He came to our world and took our sins that we might take His righteousness. And faith in the ability of Christ to save us amply and fully and entirely is the faith of Jesus.

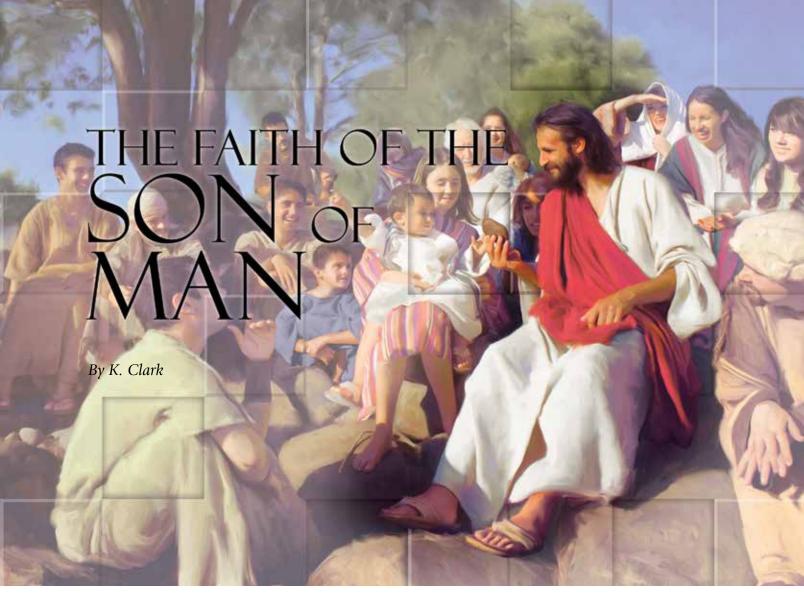
"The only safety for the Israelites was blood upon the doorposts. God said, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you' (Exodus 12:13). All other devices for safety would be without avail. Nothing but the blood on the doorposts would bar the way that the angel of death should not enter. There is salvation for the sinner in the blood of Jesus Christ alone, which cleanseth us from all sin. The man with a cultivated intellect may have vast stores of knowledge, he may engage in theological speculations, he may be great and honored of men and be considered the repository of knowledge, but unless he has a saving knowledge of Christ crucified for him, and by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, he is lost. Christ 'was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed' (Isaiah 53:5). 'Saved by the blood of Jesus Christ,' will be our only hope for time and our song throughout eternity."3 R

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¹ The Desire of Ages, pp. 316, 317.

² Ibid., p. 347.

³ Selected Messages, bk. 3, pp. 172, 173.



Introduction

Faith. . . . Some have a problem grasping a meaningful definition of just what the word implies. Perhaps this is due in part to the fact that for many people faith denotes something that is intangible and thus difficult to fathom. It is the substance of something, and, at the same time, this something is a thing that is not visually seen. As we read in Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Sometimes we, as members of the human family, find it difficult to take hold of something we cannot actually see or feel. By the way, faith itself is not a feeling—if it were, in our Christian experience we would be up emotionally one day and down the next. This

would not work well in our life; we must be absolutely convinced of that on which our faith dwells.

The entire book of Hebrews in the New Testament alludes to many people who lived their life based on faith in One higher than they, yet One who indeed was invisible to them.

But in this article we are not dwelling so much on faith as we relate it to ourselves, but upon the experiences of Jesus while He was on the earth and His faith as the Son of man. But, you say, He was the Son of God, a part of the Godhead; why did He need faith? Let us look further.

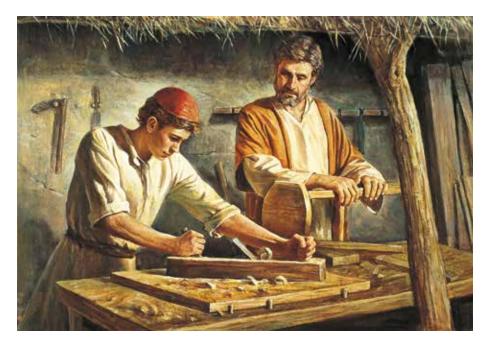
Christ as God and as human

While Jesus is God, He was also a man. In Matthew 22:41–46, Jesus posed to the unbelieving Pharisees a question which they could not answer. In fact,

after that they were careful not to ask Him any more questions on the subject of who He was. To them He looked like a man just as any other man appeared. Yet, He was different.

In John 20:27–31 we find the account of when Jesus appeared to His disciples when the doubting one, Thomas, was with them. Thomas was finally convinced that this One who stood before him was the Lord, was God. Verse 29 holds a very pertinent fact that we all must ponder, "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Many scriptural texts verify who Jesus was while upon earth with humanity. They also give a good definition of what faith really is. We, with our finite minds, do not always grasp these things but



must accept them by faith if we are to believe the things pertaining to God.

The scriptures also tell of Christ's birth as a man. In John 1:1 He is spoken of as the Word, the Word being with God and also being God. Then in verse 14 it is stated that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And as it is stated in John 3:16, God gave His Son so that sinful men and women might be redeemed. The first promise of this was stated in Genesis 3:15.

Christ was born with a human nature but was without sin. He would be tempted by the adversary just as we are, yet He would not yield to temptation and sin (Hebrews 4:15).

So we can look at Jesus as the Son of man also and can relate to His experiences while He was upon earth, since we now have the understanding that He was made flesh and blood, born of a woman and was tempted as we are. What about His faith?

The battlefield

Just as we are, Jesus was tempted at various times under various circumstances. Often He had to bow before His Father in supplication for those to whom He was offering salvation and for His own strengthening. He, who had all the power of heaven available to Him if He should choose to use it, felt as a man the need to go before His Father on bended knee. He also longed for those

closest to Him on earth—His disciples—to wait and watch with Him during some of those agonizing times when He would be in fervent prayer all night. The work He had volunteered to do for the salvation of humanity—so helpless in their sins—was very real to Him. In His times of physical weakness, the enemy sought after Him with a vengeance beyond description, but His faith in the sustaining help of His Father brought Him the strength that He needed. So it can be with us also if we will exercise that same faith and lay hold on it.

The earth that Jesus created became His battleground as He came to minister to fallen humanity and do for them that which they could not do for themselves—the work of redemption and restoration. And now, Jesus is doing the final work in the sanctuary in heaven, acting the part of a Mediator between God and humanity, finishing the redemptive work He began while here on earth. As the petitions rise to Him from the repentant ones on earth, in faith pleading for forgiveness, Christ, in faith, raises His nail-pierced hands to the Father, pleading for forgiveness for them, the ones for whom He came to earth to offer salvation.

If we could have seen . . .

If we had been witnesses to the temptations Satan placed upon Jesus as He was led into the wilderness just after

His baptism, we would have witnessed the terrible conflict the Prince of Light encountered at the hand of the prince of darkness and evil. This was a foe who was not willing to give up on his intentions to snatch as many people as he could from the One whose love had brought Him to earth to be sacrificed for their redemption. For a person to redeem something is to buy back that which had belonged to him to begin with. God had created humanity, and the race belonged to Him; now that the tempter had succeeded in bringing such disruption into the life of those created in God's image, Jesus was the One who was to buy back the fallen ones.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they caused a great separation between themselves and God. This placed the same separation between the entire human race and their Creator. There had to be someone who could make manifest God's deep love for those who had sinned. This had to be Someone who could arouse humanity's interest and gain their trust. This had to be done in such a way that humanity would realize that submission to God's will and authority is the only way to be free, truly free, from the bondage of sin into which they had fallen. It would take an act of divine love to bring the sinner back from the fallen condition.

This act of divine love was brought about through Jesus as is summarized in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." How could more love have been manifested than this? The Son of God was willing to take on humanity and become the Son of man, to endure the suffering and anguish which lay before Him so that those of the human race who were willing to accept His sacrifice could again be made whole. He became that ladder which connected humanity to heaven.

Born of a woman

In John 1:14 we read that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." The definition of incarnation is to be clothed with flesh, to take on a human body and the

nature of humans; and this is just what Christ did. He knew that by becoming a man, He would suffer the same assaults from Satan that humanity had to endure. What great faith in the forgiving power of God and His willingness to forgive lost sinners! "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). How far He was willing to go so that the broken relationship between God and humanity could be restored!

From the time of Jesus' birth as a human baby, the adversary was determined to carry out his plan of destruction toward Him. The evil Herod, the ruler at the time, under the guidance of Satan had all the children two years of age and under killed. (Matthew 2:16.) He was so determined to not have another be known as a King that he was willing to stop at nothing to destroy any potential of this happening. But an angel instructed Joseph and Mary to flee, to prevent this destruction.

Thus, from the beginning of His life clothed in humanity, Jesus was under the care of His heavenly Father. The Father communicated to Jesus' human father-figure, Joseph, through the angels, the things that needed to be done for the Child's protection. Thus He grew up knowing that He could place all trust in that Power which was above all.

Led into temptation

"Many claim that it was impossible for Christ to be overcome by temptation. Then He could not have been placed in Adam's position; He could not have gained the victory that Adam failed to gain. If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to succor us. But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured."

Our Saviour knows just how much divine power we need when we are tempted, for He received power from on high, by faith, as He went through similar experiences while He walked upon earth as a man.

Satan was subtle in the way he began his onslaught of temptations against Christ, following His baptism. He waited until He had become physically hungry, weak, and weary; when he thought the victory against Him would be easy. Jesus had fasted forty days and nights and was feeling the devastation that being without food would bring to the body. He was tempted then on the same thing that Adam and Eve were tempted on; that of food. But Jesus' answer to the tempter did not refer to Himself but referred Satan to the Father and Jesus' faith in His Father who could keep Him. "When the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:3, 4).

As other temptations were brought to Christ during this same time, the thing that kept Him and comforted Him was the declaration which had been spoken by His Father at His baptism, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17). These words strengthened His belief in the divine mission on which He embarked.

Not for Himself, but for others

It is obvious that Christ came to earth because He considered lost humanity to be of great value. He went about doing good to those with whom He came in contact. Thus He would resemble, reflect, and reveal the perfect character of God. Often He had not a place to lay His head, so He spent the night under the stars. He became weary when the multitudes followed Him from place to place, but He never forgot the reason for His being here in our midst—to reach out to the human race and draw them unto Himself. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

Christ knew the will of His Father, and He was willing to uphold those standards in all things and to teach humanity to do the same rather than deviate from them just to bring comfort to self. He referred back to the early Israelites as they were being led through the wilderness to the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 8:2, 3). Just as those early people had been faithfully led, so were their descendants to be led and nurtured. But Jesus found in these present people many of the stubborn traits of character that would keep many of them from accepting and learning from the One who had come from heaven to help them.

In Psalm 85:10 we read, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." In the loving-kindness of our Saviour, we see the harmony of God's divine attributes in Christ's working in our behalf for our salvation. God's truth and justice cannot be compromised, but, through the work of Christ, God shows mercy upon the fallen race. Christ prayed often for His people that they might see beyond the darkness which surrounded their thoughts—darkness which many of them were not willing to have dispelled so that the light of truth could enter their spiritual experience.

"By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:6, 7). The attributes of God were manifest in Christ in His human form, so that through Him there could be peace in the heart and life for those who would but accept them.

The sick restored, the dead raised to life

Everywhere Jesus went, He brought physical healing to people. He raised back to life some who had died. In these things the Father in heaven was glorified and honored. Christ cast demons out of poor tortured people and set them free.

Again, in these things, we see how He depended upon His Father. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. . . . I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and



my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:19, 30).

Christ lived and worked by faith in His Father. He declared, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10).

As the disciples went about doing good, doing the will of God, as they had been taught by Jesus to do, they encountered opposition from those who allowed the adversary to control them and their actions. Many times they could not bring about the healing which they needed to do mainly because they had not learned fully what it meant to place their whole trust in the One who could help them. They suffered many times from unbelief and put confidence in themselves rather than in the only One who could cause such miracles to happen, that His name might be glorified.

Faith makes one whole

Faith is not a mere opinion. "Saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in

covenant relation with God. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which, through the grace of Christ, the soul becomes a conquering power."²

Among those who were restored to life and to health were the poor and destitute as well as the wealthy and those in power. Those who came in behalf of others came in faith that this One could and would bring life and healing to the physical body as well as the spiritual condition.

The ultimate price

The cross on which Jesus was to be crucified was too heavy for Him to bear to the mount of crucifixion. Once again, He had had nothing to eat or drink for several hours. From the time of the Passover meal, He had agonized in prayer before His Father that if it would be possible, that He would not have to drink of the bitter cup which lay before Him. His body and Spirit were so stressed during that time that He perspired great drops of blood. He knew that He had to bear this cup so that the purpose of His coming to earth could be fulfilled. But this did

not ease the agony He had to suffer. Here was the One who was willing to die in the stead of sinful humankind, bearing the sins of all upon Himself.

The thing that so many remember in amazement are the words that Jesus uttered as He hung on the cross, the words asking the Father to forgive His enemies. There were some who would see their sins and come to repentance; but those who would not allow conversion to take place in their life rendered these words of Jesus an impossibility for them. This is just as it is with us today; we hold our destiny in our hands. We can, through faith, accept of His offer of eternal life—or we can choose to fall completely into the snares of Satan.

During this time when there was no comforting voice from heaven to soothe Jesus, there was one comfort to Him: One of the thieves who shared His crucifixion repented of his sins and asked Christ for forgiveness and for a place in heaven with Him. His request was granted by the Saviour of humanity. What a joyful reunion that will be!

By faith, the victor

"Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him who it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor."

An appeal for us

The rest of the victory gained is that Jesus arose, triumphant over the grave, and He is now in heaven as our Intercessor. May we fully accept His sacrifice and make manifest the faith that was a part of His life as He lived as a man on earth. AMEN.

References

¹ The Desire of Ages, p. 117.

² The Ministry of Healing, p. 62.

³ The Desire of Ages, p. 756.

ebrews 11 is one of my favorite passages to read when I need a quick historical overview of the faithful, or encouragement when things just don't seem to be going well. It is a passage of hope, of instruction, of faith enacted. It is a summary of VICTORY!

As I think about the topic of faith and victory, I am reminded of Jesus' question to us found in Luke 18:8, emphasis added. When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

We live in a time when faith is talked about a lot! Christianity seems to be still widespread and speaking of Christ and the reading of the Bible are still quite popular. So, why would there even be a question about whether Jesus would find faith on the earth?

It seems to me that there must be a problem with our definition, and this is where I find Hebrews 11 very helpful. Maybe you will, too.

We are already quite familiar with its opening text:

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (verse 1).

As we read through the rest of the chapter, let us really analyze what Inspiration is telling us.

Verse 2 informs us that by this faith, the elders obtained a good report, a good record. In other words, this true faith is what enabled the elders, the faithful, to be placed in the list of Hebrews 11 Victors.

We are admonished that true faith understands and places the rest of our living upon the firm foundational fact that what we see was created by the Word of God, out of things which we cannot see. That means there is not physical evidence for this creative act. There is evidence of the results of God's creative action, but we do not see the "doing" of the act itself.

So how does this translate into how we will live our life and be added to the Hebrews
11 Victors List? I am glad that you asked, because

if we don't really care, we won't find ourselves there.

As we read through Hebrews 11, prayerfully asking the Lord to give us understanding of what gems are hidden there, we can find many things. Today, we will deal with some of the surface gleanings. First, I find a list of men and women of action.

These victors were not content in just holding a theological or doctrinal belief system. They knew, as we know, if we read our Bibles as James 2:19 states, that even the devils also believe and tremble. In other words, something else is necessary.

I can almost hear you saying, "Of course, faith without works is dead, as is also written in James 2:20."

Now, I know that I am writing to Reformers who understand that obedience to God is a demonstration of true faith. We can be very zealous to promote good works—well, at

least some of them. But what I find written in Hebrews 11 is a group of people who were totally, entirely, thoroughly committed to the Lord Jesus and to doing His will. They did that, not because they were trying to do the right things to gain salvation, but because they had a glimpse of the loving, powerful character of their

Creator

THE HEBREWS 11 VICTORS

By P. Stemmler



and responded in a fullness of commitment rarely found in our day. What do I mean? Well, let's look at just a few examples of these victors and try to imagine their walk with God in our time.

1. Cain and Abel

Two church members raised by repentant parents. They both know the right things to do. Abel responds by giving all the Lord has asked, because he accepts that he needs a mediator and believes Him, acting accordingly by presenting the typical sacrifice of a lamb. Cain responds partially by bringing what he thinks will suffice, the product of his good works. He doesn't feel his need, therefore, he doesn't bring the typical sacrifice. I would call this partial obedience, the kind that obeys what we feel like but not the whole package that God calls for.

2. Enoch

Enoch was totally won over by the love of God when he saw the dependency of his new son and his own responsibility as a father. He could see the relationship of his heavenly Father in a new light—and over the rest of his 300 years he learned of and responded more ardently to that love, seeking to shed it abroad, first in his family and home, then to the world outside. His was no self-righteous walk, no hypocritical piety. His children, his wife, his neighbors, the people he worked

with—everyone knew that he loved God and that he let that love shine through his own life.

"Of
Enoch it is
written that
he lived
sixty-five
years and
begat a
son...
During
these

earlier years Enoch had loved and feared God and had kept His commandments. . . . But after the birth of his first son, Enoch reached a higher experience; he was drawn into a closer relationship with God. He realized more fully his own obligations and responsibility as a son of God. And as he saw the child's love for its father, its simple trust in his protection; as he felt the deep, yearning tenderness of his own heart for that firstborn son, he learned a precious lesson of the wonderful love of God to men in the gift of His Son, and the confidence which the children of God may repose in their heavenly Father. The infinite, unfathomable love of God through Christ became the subject of his meditation day and night; and with all the fervor of his soul he sought to reveal that love to the people among whom he dwelt."1

3. Noah

Here is another hero, a man who knows the voice of God in the midst of a very wicked people. He not only recognizes the voice that gives him instruction, but he follows that instruction in every detail. He willingly puts everything, and I mean everything, into the building of that vessel of protection for the saving of his family. Notice, he worked first for the home and in that first work, he was preaching to the world around him.

Noah wasn't preoccupied with gaining a position in the local community, or too busy with his secular work to

hear and do what God was asking. He went to work to build that home that would eventually save his family, the creatures of God's making and a history that we should learn from. What is God calling us to do today that will require all of our energy, our finances, our attention? One author equated Noah's building project to our own time in the call of God to move our families to the country, to have simple homes, grow our own food, educate our children and while so doing, to preach the greatest sermon possible to a seeking world. Are we willing?

"Noah and his family were not alone in fearing and obeying God. But Noah was the most pious and holy of any upon the earth and was the one whose life God preserved to carry out His will in building the ark and warning the world of its coming doom. Methuselah, the grandfather of Noah, lived until the very year of the Flood; and there were others who believed the preaching of Noah and aided him in building the ark, who died before the flood of waters came upon the earth. Noah, by his preaching and example in building the ark, condemned the world. God gave all who chose an opportunity to repent and turn to Him. But they believed not the preaching of Noah. They mocked at his warnings and ridiculed the building of that



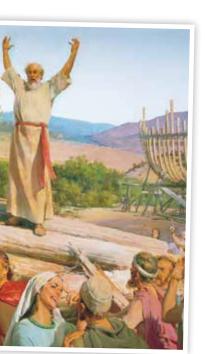
immense vessel on dry land. Noah's efforts to reform his fellow men did not succeed. But for more than one hundred years he persevered in his efforts to turn men to repentance and to God. Every blow struck upon the ark was preaching to the people. Noah directed, he preached, he worked, while the people looked on in amazement and regarded him as a fanatic."²

"Our words, our actions, our deportment, our dress, everything, should preach. Not only with our words should we speak to the people, but everything pertaining to our person should be a sermon to them, that right impressions may be made upon them, and that the truth spoken may be taken by them to their homes; and thus our faith will stand in a better light before the community."³

4. Abraham

Here is another man of faith. He has a heart to listen and to follow God, even when he has no idea where God will take him. It's interesting how that comes up again, isn't it? Abraham does what? He follows, not knowing where he is going. How can that be? What about security, planning, goals, investments, jobs, the future?

What about the fact that he was going to have to dwell in temporary structures, among strangers, only able



to follow God's leading, entirely dependent upon God for his future prosperity?

"[Abraham] had no question to ask concerning the land of promise—whether the soil was fertile and the climate healthful; whether the

Hebrews 11 is a group of people who were totally, entirely, thoroughly committed to the Lord Jesus and to doing His will . . . because they had a glimpse of the loving, powerful character of their Creator.

country afforded agreeable surroundings and would afford opportunities for amassing wealth. God had spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be.

"Many are still tested as was Abraham. They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from the heavens, but He calls them by the teachings of His word and the events of His providence. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations, and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do; but a life of ease and the influence of friends and kindred would hinder the development of the very traits essential for its accomplishment. He calls them away from human influences and aid, and leads them to feel the need of His help, and to depend upon Him alone, that He may reveal Himself to them. Who is ready at the call of Providence to renounce cherished plans and familiar associations? Who will accept new duties and enter untried fields, doing God's work with firm and willing heart, for Christ's sake counting his losses gain? He who will do this has the faith of Abraham, and will share with him that 'far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' with which 'the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared' (2 Corinthians 4:17; Romans 8:18)."4

I am starting to see a real pattern in this Hebrews 11 list. What about Joseph having to learn to trust in God when all the circumstances seemed to be turned against him? Or Moses' parents taking the risk that they did to

save their son's life? Or Moses giving up all the glorious future in Egypt for his people? They all had one thing in common. They followed God and His instruction no matter what! What about us?

You can go through the rest of the list and see the commitment of hearts to God demonstrated in the life of the victors in Hebrews 11. What a blessing, what a challenge! But just in case you might be feeling a little discouraged with yourself at this time, I would like to look at these heroes in just a slightly different light—the light of their humanity.

We can read of the same people, and realize there were points in their life in which they weren't listening to God so well; they were not following Him so wholeheartedly. They made mistakes. And this is where Hebrews 11 is also our encouragement.

Do you find yourself over in Egypt instead of the Promised Land, like Abraham? Have you lied to anyone, including God, about what is really going on in your life? Take courage. As we repent, God can lead us onward to where we ought to be.

Have you laughed at God's prescribed will, as Sarah did? Have you made light of the counsel of God on any given area of life or blatantly disobeyed His instruction? There is hope with repentance.

Have you made decisions which have caused separation of heart and life from God's ideal like Jacob did? Have you been a deceiver in your religious life?

Have you hurt others with your tongue, your influence, your position like Moses when he killed the Egyptian? Have you run away from pain, sorrow, and trials in order to hide?

Have you lived a life like Rahab, a life that you do not want anyone to know about, a past that is not "righteous"? God can work in and through you anyway.

David, Gideon, Barak, and all others were human and had their faults, but they also had their hope. That hope was not placed upon themselves and the good that they could do. It was placed upon Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith. And that should be the same for us.

We may have a heart's desire to do the will of God; we may have failed, we may see things that discourage us, but that is not where our focus should be. Our failings show us that we cannot merit anything for our salvation. We should focus on Christ, His mercy, His love, His power, on that power that could create the world and can recreate us.

"When men learn they cannot earn righteousness by their own merit of

works, and they look with firm and entire reliance upon Jesus Christ as their only hope, there will not be so much of self and so little of Jesus."⁵

Jesus is everything and self is nothing—this is a very important concept. I have been trying to understand why there was such a reaction to the message of Jones and Waggoner. Is it because "self" didn't want to be dead? Is it because "self" didn't want to completely obey all that God was calling for, to be accomplished through His strength? I am thinking that "self" is really subtle and can often wear religious garb, but the test will be as described in *Steps to Christ*:

"Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to

Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things."⁶

When we read the list in Hebrews 11, we find people who understood the following passage. Will we?

"When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit. But He will not accept those who claim to have faith in Him and yet are disloyal to His Father's commandment. We hear a

great deal about faith, but we need to hear a great deal more about works. Many are deceiving their own souls by living an easy-going, accommodating, crossless religion."⁷

"While God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul." §

There is another group of faithful servants that deserve mentioning. They are the unnamed. They are those millions who were martyred for their faith, who endured tragic things and unspoken sorrow. Why? Because they would rather die than renounce their faith; rather be tortured than compromise one dot or tittle, rather suffer reproach than be thought well of and miss Heaven.

Are you one of those faithful? Those who are quietly doing their best to honor your Lord and do faithfully that which is set before you? Are you suffering reproach and subtle or not-so-subtle forms of persecution for standing for the right though the heavens fall? Keep on, you are in good company.

As we contemplate all of this, my brother, sister, friend, let us determine to put our wills on the side of Christ, totally, completely, entirely, whole-heartedly. Let us repent of our past mistakes, our wrong motives, our sleepy service, our lack of energetic service and go forward, onward in following our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Then, we too will be added to the list of Hebrews 11 Victors!

References

- ¹Conflict and Courage, p. 28.
- ² The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 1, p. 70.
- ³ The Review and Herald, May 30, 1871.
- ⁴ Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 126, 127.
- ⁵ Faith and Works, p. 25.
- ⁶ Steps to Christ, p. 58.
- ⁷ Faith and Works, p. 50. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 100.





e have many reasons to thank God, especially for the mediation of Jesus: "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

"[Christ] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

How long will we have Christ as our Intercessor? Forever? Or must we prepare for the day when the ministry of Christ as our Advocate will end? In other words: Will the door of probation be open forever? May sinners turn to God and find salvation anytime in the indefinite future? Will the door finally be closed to all those who would not enter in while the door was open? This is one of the most important, distinctive doctrinal questions that has separated Adventists from other denominations.

Our Lord Jesus has assured us that if we keep asking, seeking, and knocking, the door will be opened to us, and we will find the spiritual help we need (Matthew 7:7, 8). But He also warns us that those who think they can postpone their spiritual preparation until His second coming will find the door closed. This warning is expressed in the parable of the ten virgins.

"At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Matthew 25:6-12).

"When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; . . . he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are" (Luke 13:25).

"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6, emphasis supplied).

1. The Investigative Judgment

Shortly before the coming of Christ (and just before the wrath of God is poured out in the seven last plagues) the judgment must take place.

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God" (1 Peter 4:17)?

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Peter 2:9).

Consider Revelation 14:6, 7 and verses 15, 16, which state that the investigative judgment must take place before the "harvest of the earth," elsewhere called "the end of this world." Verse 7 refers to those who announce to the world that we are living in a time of preparation for the end. At the very end, "the Son of man shall send forth his angels" to gather the tares for the fire and the wheat for the heavenly barn (Matthew 13:30, 40-43). Each individual alive at that time has been already designated as either a grain of "wheat" or a "tare" and is already carrying the mark that identifies his or her choice.

In preparation for that harvest, the Lord appeals to us to "repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you" (Acts 3:19, 20).

In this time of preparation for the end we must seek the Lord to help us gain a genuine experience in repentance and conversion. What is the difference between having our sins forgiven and having our sins "blotted out"? The Lord hears us every day as we pray: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). But to have our sins blotted out is something completely different.

"In the great day of final award, the dead are to be 'judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works' (Revelation

20:12). Then by virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the sins of all the truly penitent will be blotted from the books of heaven."¹

"Sins that have not been repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but will stand to witness against the sinner in the day of God."²

2. The conclusion of the judgment revealed

What declaration will be made in the courts of heaven when the investigative judgment is completed shortly before the coming of Christ?

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Revelation 22:11–15).

After these two classes have been identified (by the declaration of Jesus recorded in these verses), and after their destiny has been decided, a character change will be impossible.

"Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matthew 25:28, 29).

"When Christ shall cease His work as mediator in man's behalf, then this time of trouble will begin. Then the case of every soul will have been decided, and there will be no atoning blood to cleanse from sin. When Jesus leaves His position as man's intercessor before God, the solemn announcement is made, 'He that is unjust, let

him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still' (Revelation 22:11)."³

3. The seven last plagues

As soon as the intercessory work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary is finished, the four angels release the "winds" of the earth.

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor



on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Revelation 7:1–3).

As soon as the sealing work is finished, the "winds" of national and international conflicts will start blowing. "Christ has made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The number of His subjects is made up; 'the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven' (Daniel 7:27), is about to be given to the heirs of salvation, and Jesus is to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

"When He leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control

of the finally impenitent. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old."4

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth' (Revelation 16:1). Not only will Satan cause great trouble on earth, God will also pour out His anger, through the seven last plagues, on those who

have rejected Him.

4. The time of trouble

Then the saints will have to go through a time of trouble described in these verses:

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time

thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1).

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. . . . For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:9, 21).

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 12:17; 13:16, 17).

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3).

5. Our preparation for that time

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:34–36).

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jeremiah 30:7).

"As Jacob was threatened with death by his angry brother, so the people of God will be in peril from the wicked who are seeking to destroy them. And as the patriarch wrestled all night for deliverance from the hand of Esau, so the righteous will cry to God day and night for deliverance from the enemies that surround them. . . .

"Such will be the experience of God's people in their final struggle with the powers of evil. God will test their faith, their perseverance, their confidence in His power to deliver them. Satan will endeavor to terrify them with the thought that their cases are hopeless; that their sins have been too great to receive pardon. They will have a deep sense of their shortcomings, and as they review their lives their hopes will sink. But remembering the greatness of God's mercy, and their own sincere repentance, they will plead His promises made through Christ to helpless, repenting sinners. Their faith will not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. They will lay hold of the strength of God, as Jacob laid hold of the Angel, and the language of their souls will be, 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.'

"Had not Jacob previously repented of his sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, God could not have heard his prayer and mercifully preserved his life. So in the time of trouble, if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance. But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they will have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins will have been blotted out by the atoning blood of Christ, and they cannot bring them to remembrance."5

6. The executive judgment

After Christ receives the kingdom (Luke 19:12, 15; Revelation 11:12), He will return, bringing His reward with Him to give to every one according to his or her work." The reward that He is bringing with Him has already been decided in the investigative judgment. This is implied in the statement in Revelation 22:12. And now, at His coming, He will say to the saints: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom"; and to wicked: "Depart from me" (Matthew 25:34, 41). The

result of the pre-advent investigative judgment (Revelation 14:7 (compare verse 7 with verses 15 and 16)) will be applied at the coming of Christ. This is the executive judgment mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:1.

7. Final questions

In what sense is the Flood in the days of Noah compared to the coming of Christ in our days?

"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26, 27).

What did the multitude that stood outside realize when the door of the ark was shut and it began to rain? They understood that the door of probation for them was shut forever.

How is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra to be compared to the destruction that is coming in the day of Christ?

"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:8–30).

Did the inhabitants of those wicked cities still have a chance to repent and turn to the Lord when fire was coming down from heaven? What did Christ mean when He said: "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed"?

God help us to trust the Bible and reject false hopes based on imaginary theories! God help us to put our trust entirely in Him! May we accept God's leading as He prepares us to live through the time of trouble coming in the near future. God help us to repent and be converted in preparation for living without the mediation of Jesus.

References

¹ Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 357.

² The Great Controversy, p. 486.

³ Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 201.

⁴ The Great Controversy, pp. 613, 614.

⁵ Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 201, 202.



he attitude
we assume, the state of
our feelings and temper
under irritation, all the individual peculiarities of our
disposition and personal manners and
habits, are determining our destiny."1

An older lady used to live a few doors down from my house. It seems she had had a serious automobile accident near our homes. One of her legs was injured, leaving it a couple of inches shorter than her other leg. Sometime after the accident, she went for a follow-up surgery to attempt to lengthen her short leg. After the anesthesia wore off, this lady woke up to the fact that doctors can sometimes make mistakes. The surgeon had lengthened the wrong leg!

A 2012 study by John Hopkins University suggests that across the United States as many as 20 surgeries each week are performed on the opposite side of the body from where the surgery should have taken place.

I would like to ask any surgeon who makes such a mistake several ques-

tions. One of them is the question, "What does it feel like while you are making a mistake?" We all know what it feels like after you realize that you have made a mistake. But what does it feel like before you realize it is a mistake? Does the surgeon feel good about being able to do the surgery? Does he or she have the satisfaction of a job well done at the end? We generally don't feel something is wrong while we are making a mistake. We feel just fine.

That is exactly the danger for each one of us. We sin and think we are doing just what is right. We are hurtful to others and feel like we are kind. Our problem is that we cannot rely on any sense of feeling to tell us when we are wrong.

The surgeon that makes a mistake may have performed thousands of surgeries correctly beforehand. I am not suggesting that such a surgeon has never done well. In fact, the particular surgeon mentioned above may have done very well. Any human is capable of making a mistake. But we do not want a surgeon whose average is high. We do not want

to risk being cut open by someone who operates on the correct body part 95% of the time. We need consistent quality, not just a high average.

Just because we do wrong sometimes does not mean that we are nothing but evil. Many times selfish and mean people accomplish some wonderful feats. The cruelest people can show kindness sometimes. But peace does not exist when we have a high average behavior. The world is not safe if we are cruel only 5% of the time. The point is not what your and my average behavior is. Like a surgeon, we need consistent quality. We should never do wrong. We need to learn how to avoid "mistakes." We need to be free from evil.

There are ways to help surgeons never cut the incorrect body part. Suggestions include marking the arm or leg to be operated while the patient is still awake and alert. And discussing the surgery between the patient and the doctor before starting surgery to make sure the doctor and the patient have the same expectation of which place the operation will occur.

But here our analogy breaks down. We cannot simply provide a few easy tips to keep us as saints.

"There is much for each to unlearn with respect to himself, as well as much to learn. Old habits and customs must be shaken off, and it is only by earnest struggles to correct these errors, and a full reception of the truth in carrying out its principles, by the grace of God, that the victory can be gained."²

A challenge for each of us

Too easily we see the old habits and customs that others must "shake off." But we cannot see all of our own faults unless God Himself shows them to us. As the moment approached for Jesus to return to Heaven, He told His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:7, 8). It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convince or "reprove" me of sin. I cannot do it for myself. We should pray for the Holy Spirit to show us where we are wrong and to change us. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24). "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (Psalm 19:12, 13).

As Jesus neared the end of His earthly ministry, He focused many of His lessons on personal responsibility. In these parables, Jesus teaches us that we will exhibit the same kind of responsibility and integrity in great world changing projects as we do in quiet unnoticed ones. We are as likely to make a good national leader as we are a good private person. We are competent to govern ten cities when we can govern our own temper.

Just here is the greatest challenge for each one of us. Most of us have dreamed of being rich, or powerful, or influential, or popular. Satan teaches that each one of these qualities is more important than character. Jesus teaches that honesty is more important than riches, teachability than power, humility than influence and popularity. Those who run a department well can learn to run the whole company well. Those that don't manage well the little bit of life that is given to them will lose the responsibility that they have.

We should not trust ourselves if we are not faithful in managing our own life. We should not trust others who are careless in the important details of their life. We should not trust a surgeon who is not careful enough to determine accurately where to perform the surgery. If they don't even care what our name is, why would they care how our surgery will turn out?

Don't underestimate the smaller details!

" 'He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much' (Luke 16:10). By unfaithfulness in even the smallest duties, man robs his Maker of the service which is His due. This unfaithfulness reacts upon himself. He fails of gaining the grace, the power, the force of character, which may be received through an unreserved surrender to God. Living apart from Christ he is subject to Satan's temptations, and he makes mistakes in his work for the Master. Because he is not guided by right principles in little things, he fails to obey God in the great matters which he regards as his special work. The defects cherished in dealing with life's minor details pass into more important affairs. He acts on the principles to which he has accustomed himself. Thus actions repeated form habits, habits form character, and by the character our destiny for time and for eternity is decided.

"Only by faithfulness in the little things can the soul be trained to act with fidelity under larger responsibilities. . . .

"[God] calls us to be His witnesses in the world today. In the smallest as well as the largest affairs of life He desires us to reveal to men the principles of His kingdom.

"Christ in His life on earth taught the lesson of careful attention to the

little things. The great work of redemption weighed continually upon His soul. As He was teaching and healing, all the energies of mind and body were taxed to the utmost; yet He noticed the most simple things in life and in nature. His most instructive lessons were those in which by the simple things of nature He illustrated the great truths of the kingdom of God. He did not overlook the necessities of the humblest of His servants. His ear heard every cry of need. He was awake to the touch of the afflicted woman in the crowd; the very slightest touch of faith brought a response. When He raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus, He reminded her parents that she must have something to eat. When by His own mighty power He rose from the tomb, He did not disdain to fold and put carefully in the proper place the grave clothes in which He had been laid away.

"The work to which as Christians we are called is to cooperate with Christ for the salvation of souls. This work we have entered into covenant with Him to do. To neglect the work is to prove disloyal to Christ. But in order to accomplish this work we must follow His example of faithful, conscientious attention to the little things. This is the secret of success in every line of Christian effort and influence."

The secret of ultimate success

"Success in the work of God is not the result of chance, of accident, or of destiny; it is the outworking of God's providence, and the award of faith and discretion, of virtue and persevering labor."⁴

The only way that any of us will live in the new earth in the future is if we make Jesus and living like He did our highest goal in life. If we have any goal more important to us, we are rejecting Jesus and choosing our goal over Him. God help us to trust Him here and live consistently like we mean to live in the new earth. \mathcal{M}

References

- ¹ Manuscript Releases, vol. 19, p. 92.
- ² Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 485, 486.
- ³ Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 356-358.
- 4 The Review and Herald, April 4, 1912.



Canada

Annual conference in Toronto, May 2014.

Mexico

Baptism in Bambu, Chiapas, March 2014 (middle).

Philippines

Agricultural Ministry conducted in Manila, August 2014 (bottom).





U.S.A.

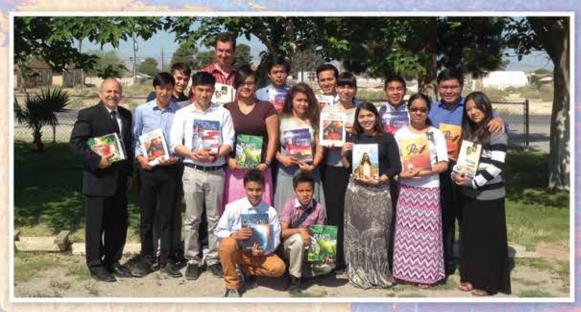
Colporteur training seminar in Las Vegas, April 2014.

Australia

Elim Missionary School graduation ceremony, June 2014 (middle).

Sri Lanka

Dedication of a new chapel in Navalapatti, April 2014 (bottom).









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It's Easier Than It Seems

By B. Montrose



Dad responded.

"It seems as if every day has a new thing that I have to do that's hard! Arithmetic problems get harder. I have to write a book report on a book that's not very interesting. Then I have to clean up the mess that the puppy made when he got loose. Next I have to rake the leaves over again since the wind blew down more leaves after the ones that I had already raked up yesterday. Then the little neighbor boy comes and jumps into my pile of leaves and makes them fly everywhere so it takes me twice as long to finish. He even laughs about it, but I'm not allowed to get mad at him. . . . The list goes on and on. . . . Dad, does all this trouble happen just because I'm trying to be good and follow God?"

Dad smiled. "You're not the only one who has wondered about this kind of thing, Allen. Even the faithful king David wondered why the wicked seemed to have such an easy life on this earth, as if they had no problems at all. In Psalm 37:35-40 he talks about this. By faith, David saw that good would come to those who trust

in God and that the wicked would perish. You're wondering: Does God really see all that people go through? Why does He let it happen? Let's read what the Lord's servant writes of how good can come from all of this:

" 'The little incidents of everyday life often pass without our notice, but it is these things that shape the character. Every event of life is great for good or for evil. The mind needs to be trained by daily tests, that it may acquire power to stand in any difficult position.' 1 'Let me assure you that the struggles and conflicts which must be endured in the discharge of duty, the self-denials and sacrifices which must be made if we are faithful to Christ, are not created by Him. . . . Trials would exist in greater power and number were we to refuse obedience to Christ and become the servants of Satan and the slaves of sin."2 The Bible says, 'Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard' (Proverbs 13:15). 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all' (Psalm 34:19). Yes, Allen, difficult trials and tests come to everyone. But without God's help they would be much, much harder. He is our Friend and Helper in every time of need."

"You know, Dad, I suppose this is what Jesus went through while on

earth. He had to learn His school subjects, He had to do His chores, He was good and kind to everyone who needed His help—even to those who made His life very, very hard. But after He finished His work, He was able to rise from the dead and the story has a happy

"That's right, son. Jesus has all power in Heaven and on earth—and He's going to help you today with all that you need to do. Let's ask Him right now!" R

References

ending."

¹ Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 561.

² Ibid., p. 558.