

© Copyright, 1975, International Publication Services, FMB/IMB, of SBC

YT51S

PEOPLE OF FAITH

BIBLE STUDY FOR AFRICAN YOUTH

Written by: Paul Burkwall

Adapted to new format by: Jo Scales

INDEX

CHAPTER

1. FAITH IS POSITIVE
2. THE FAITH OF ABEL
3. THE FAITH OF ENOCH
4. THE FAITH OF NOAH
5. THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM
6. THE FAITH OF ISAAC
7. THE FAITH OF JACOB
8. THE FAITH OF SARAH
9. THE FAITH OF JOSEPH
10. THE FAITH OF MOSES
11. THE FAITH OF RAHAB
12. THE FAITH OF OTHERS
13. THE FAITH OF TODAY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The writer of this book is Paul A. Burkwall, who was born in Missouri, U.S.A. He was educated in Texas and Kentucky, served as a missionary journeyman in Nigeria and as a Home Mission Board summer missionary in Arizona. He has served as pastor and as youth director in churches in America. He has also been a missionary in Zambia and is presently serving in Nigeria.

CHAPTER ONE

FAITH IS POSITIVE

Aim: I will understand faith better and develop deeper faith.

Background Scripture: Hebrews 10:32-39; 11

Verses in Today's Lesson: Hebrews 11:1-3

Memory Verse: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

It was half-time in an important football game between two African teams from different countries. A loyal fan was talking loudly about his team although they were behind 1-0 at the half. "I know my team will equalize in second half and go ahead to win the match," he said.

You might say, "What if the team does not come back in the second half to win?" This reminds us that faith in human events is not always well grounded, but what about faith in God and in the promise of God? We will learn that faith in God does bring assurance. He is worthy of our faith. He never fails to keep his promises. Interpretation

What is faith? The writer of Hebrews tells us, "...faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

This would indicate that these things do not yet appear before us as things we have or can see. When we have faith it is in things we cannot see. We must believe without seeing.

The writer of Hebrews tells us God approved of the men of old who had faith. It would be right for us to believe that God would like for us to have faith also. In fact, Jesus commanded it, "...Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). We too can gain God's approval if we have faith in him and let him control our lives.

Hebrews 11 is written to help all of us learn from the examples of people who had positive faith in God. Our own weak faith can be stronger as we see the positive results of other people's faith. Who were some of those people? How did their faith merit recording in the Bible?

In Hebrews 11:3 we see an example of our own faith when we believe God spoke and world was created. The world was not made out of any material. There was nothing from which to make it until God spoke and created the world. We did not see him creating the world, and no other person saw it. Therefore when we believe this we are exercising our faith.

Faith is not just a belief in the mind, but it shows itself in action. A person may say he has faith in God and in the teachings of the Bible. This faith will become real, however, only when he lives by those teachings. When that person gives his life to God and depends on his guidance, his faith becomes real. He cannot have faith without action.

A person may say that he has faith that the water in a certain place is clean and pure. His faith will become real when he drinks some of that water. Then he will show his faith by his actions. Faith and action must go together.

Application For My Life

We can and should look at the faith of other people. We need to try to understand what faith is, and many times we can learn from other people's experiences. But we must understand that their faith is not our faith. This lesson will have meaning only when we grow in faith.

Do you understand the meaning of positive faith in God? If you have faith in him you will believe that he loves you. You will believe that he wants to forgive you of your sin and draw you to himself. God wants you to have a right relationship to himself so much that he gave his only Son, Jesus, to die for your sin.

You cannot see this love as you would see a table or a chair. But if you will believe that he loves you this much, you will be in position to give your life to him.

As you exercise the small amount of faith you have, you will become stronger in your faith. Each time you use the faith you have, you will find that it grows and becomes deeper.

When you believe God, you will find that he never fails to keep his promises to you.

Trusting Jesus as your Saviour is only the first step. He will continue to help you grow as you walk with him. We never get too old or too wise to grow in our faith. God will help us as we depend on him with whatever amount of faith we have.

Have you ever had an occasion to use all the faith you had that God would keep his promises? He is always faithful to keep his promises. You can trust him without doubt or fear, and you will never be disappointed.

Sometimes men fail and forget what they have promised to do. Sometimes they do not have the ability to do what they thought they could do. But God is able and eager to keep every promise he has made.

Will you trust him today as your Saviour and the Lord of your life? Will you then ask him to teach you to have faith in him and to depend on him?

Things To Do

1. Talk to some of the Christians in your church to find some cases where faith was exercised and made stronger. Ask them to tell you how their faith came to be strong. Perhaps some will share with you a special time when they had to depend on God in a special way, and through this their faith grew stronger. Write the facts down so you can share them with the class when you meet again.

2. Say the Memory Verse every morning this week before you get out of bed. Think about it during the day. Ask God to help you understand it.

3. Write down your best definition of faith, and bring it to class when you meet again. Read those verses in Hebrews 11 several times and ask God to show you their meaning.

4. Pray that God will help your faith to grow.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FAITH OF ABEL

Aim: I will learn about Abel who gave his best to God.

Background Scriptures: Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:1-16

Verses in Today's Lesson: Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:3-6

Memory Verse: "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Work was progressing slowly on the building of the great Panama Canal. Thousands of workers were dying from yellow fever. No one knew what was causing the disease that was crippling efforts to link the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Walter Reed was a doctor who believed that yellow fever was carried by a certain mosquito. To prove that this was true, he developed an experiment in which he would be bitten by this type of mosquito which had already bitten yellow fever patients. Walter Reed soon developed the dreaded disease. His willingness to sacrifice himself proved that the mosquito was the carrier of yellow fever.

In offering himself, Walter Reed was offering the best he had. Our Bible study today tells of another person who gave the best that he had to God. The person was Abel.

Interpretation

Abel is the first person the writer of Hebrews names as one of those who had faith. He offered a more acceptable sacrifice to God than his brother, Cain, offered. By this act, he won God's approval.

Abel showed how to sacrifice to God. He knew that all he had was given to him by God. In expressing his joyful thanksgiving he wanted to offer back to God the best that he had. He took the best, first-born young lambs to sacrifice. From these fine animals, he cut the best portions of meat and this was what he gave to God. Abel felt that God deserved the best that he could give him.

When Abel brought his sacrifice before God, God "...had regard for Abel and his offering" (Genesis 4:4b). God accepted the offering from his hand, but he rejected Cain's offering. Why? Both men brought portions of what they had produced. God accepted one and rejected the other.

A possible answer is that Abel brought produce from the first-born of his herds while Cain simply brought "...an offering of the fruit of the ground" (Genesis 4:3b). Perhaps Cain kept back the best for himself. Whether that is true or not, the Bible says Cain's heart was not right. God could see into both men's hearts, and he saw sin in Cain's.

Cain's attitude was bad, and he quickly showed his anger when God rejected his offering. Instead of pleasing God with his faith, Cain allowed sin to fill his

mind with jealousy and hatred toward Abel. He did not understand that all life is a gift. He decided that he would take Abel's life, instead of loving and caring for his brother as he might have done.

As soon as Cain had made his plan, he asked Abel to go out to the field with him. It is difficult to understand how much jealousy he was experiencing. He was no longer able to think of his brother with love. He was no longer able to think clearly about anything. His mind and heart were filled with rage that his younger brother had won God's approval, and he had not.

Arriving in the field, Cain struck quickly and killed Abel. He must have hidden Abel's body because Genesis 4:9 says God asked Cain where Abel was. Cain pretended that he had no idea where his younger brother had gone. He asked God, "Am I to care for my brother? Should I know where he is at every minute of the day?"

God charged Cain with the crime. "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10b). God knew what had happened. Remember that we have no secrets from God. He can see into our hearts and knows every thought we have. He knew exactly what was going on in Cain's heart. Sin cannot be covered up.

Application For My Life

Abel gave the best that he had to God. Cain did not give his best. Instead, he took something he had no right to take, the life of another man. What about your own giving?

Have you realized the truth that God has freely given you everything you have? Do you think of God as a loving and giving God? Do you thank him for all the gifts he has given you, especially the wonderful gift of salvation through Jesus Christ?

God provides the finest example we have of the way to give. He gives gifts that we do not earn, and we must accept them in faith. He gave us life, and we accept the gift by our unconscious act of breathing. He gives us food, and we accept the gift by eating. He offers mankind forgiveness of sin and salvation, and we accept by faith the death of Jesus as payment for our sins. We let God control our lives. We accept all the gifts God gives us, knowing that we have done nothing to earn them.

When we realize that God has given us everything we have, we feel gratitude to him. Nothing is really ours, but everything is God's. We want to thank God for all he has given us by returning some of our gifts to him. We offer God money, time and service. A Christian with the true sense of giving gives happily and joyfully of the best that he has.

The poor widow's act of giving two small coins to God in Luke 21:1-4 was praised by Jesus. Why? It was because she joyfully gave all she had, her very best.

The Memory Verse for today tells us to present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice. This living sacrifice is a holy offering and will be accepted joyfully by our loving Lord. Can you give yourself in this way? If we present our bodies in this way, then giving money to the church, serving others and sharing Christ with those around us will become acts of joy and worship.

Think about what is really valuable to you. Whatever you have in mind this moment really belongs to God. Have you thanked God for it? Are you giving yourself to God and accepting his gifts to you? God can do amazing acts in your life if you have given your life completely to him.

Things To Do

1. Make a list of things you own that you think are valuable. Make a mark beside each one that you have used for God. Be sure to include your physical abilities such as your ability to sing well, to preach, to teach, to play a musical instrument. Include your money, your family, your home, your time and your work.
2. Thank God for each of the items on your list since God gave each of them to you. Ask God to show you how you can use each thing for his glory. He will reveal to you the way you can give your best to him.
3. Memorize Romans 12:1. Say the verse every day until you can claim it as your own to use throughout your life.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FAITH OF ENOCH

Aim: I will discover what a daily walk with God means.

Background Scripture: Hebrews 11:5-6; Genesis 5:21-24

Verse in Today's Lesson: Hebrews 11:5-6

Memory Verse: "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I command you this day for your good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Michael was very disappointed. He had studied hard in primary school. He had succeeded well in his examinations and had felt sure he would be accepted into secondary school. That year, however, many other students had also done well in their studies. Michael failed to get a place in a secondary school.

Like many others, Michael decided to try to find work in the nearest town. No transport was possible. He would have to travel by walking. He covered the many miles, stopping often to ask for water and food. At night kind people invited him into their homes to sleep.

With hope still alive, Michael walked the remaining miles to arrive in the town in late evening. Again, he was able to find a place to sleep and was grateful. The next day he would begin to search for work.

Michael had taken a walk of faith. He had walked toward a very uncertain future. Christians also walk by faith, but our walk is toward a certain future. This lesson is about a man who "walked with God" and has been known because of it.

Interpretation

Enoch is the second person the writer of Hebrews names in his list of the faithful. A person shows his faith by his actions. Enoch's act was simply that he walked with God. God was so pleased with Enoch's daily walking that he did not allow him to die a human death. Genesis 5:24 says "...he was not, for God took him." His lifetime of walking with God led to an eternity of walking with God.

What kind of life did Enoch lead that pleased God so much? The Bible does not tell us what daily activities occupied this man. We do not know his occupation, whether he lived in the city or countryside, whether he was rich or poor. All we know is that he began to walk with God when his son Methuselah, was born, and that pleased God.

Enoch was sure to have led a life of obedience to God. He tried to do what he knew God wanted. He did not follow the evil customs those around him followed. He knew that the best life is found in following after God. He must have talked

to God several times each day. Enoch was probably eager to tell others of the joy that he found in following God.

Enoch's name meant "dedicated," and this was the life he led. He dedicated himself to God and walked closely with him all the days of his earthly life.

One day Enoch's family and friends began to look for him. He had not come home at the proper time, or he had missed a family worship or he had failed to come home to sleep. Their search was in vain. They found nobody. Enoch had not died. He had been taken from his earthly existence into the heavenly presence of God. Enoch's faithful walking with God had a beautiful reward.

Application For My Life

People often talk about walking with God. Christians today can walk with God. Even though we do not have the joy of walking with Jesus like Peter, Matthew and John did when he was still on earth, we can still walk with him.

We walk with him as we follow his directions in the Scriptures. We walk with him as the Holy Spirit speaks within us to lead us. We walk with him when he helps us every day.

After we invite Jesus into our lives, we need to invite him daily to lead us in the way we live. An excellent way to do this is by having a "quiet time" with God every morning. Quiet time is a special time set aside for you and God to meet together. No other person is there. During this ten or fifteen minutes the Christian focuses his complete attention upon God. He begins with prayer for direction then reads and studies his Bible by some plan he has chosen. He may sing songs. Then he asks God's direction for the day. The Christian allows God time to talk to him. When we walk with someone, we talk with them too. The Christian closes his quiet time with a prayer of thanksgiving.

The Memory Verse today tells us what God expects of us. Learn it now. He wants us to walk in his ways, love him, serve him with our whole heart and soul and keep his commandments. God's purpose for wanting us to walk with him is that we will be filled with joy. The best way to live is to follow God. His way is best because of his love for us and his desire to give us good things. Matthew 7:9-11 shows that Jesus was aware that God wants to give us good things.

When we begin to walk with God we need to continue the walk which leads to life forever with God. The destination is certain. Walking with God is the way to prevent Satan from commanding our lives. We cannot walk with God and Satan at the same time. God alone gives us the way in which we should live.

What about your walk with God? Are you like Michael in the Introduction who walked toward an uncertain future? Or are you certain of your future because God is in control of your life? Have you taken the first step with God by asking Jesus to forgive your sins and to live inside you? Do you daily allow God to lead your life? Look seriously at your life and see whether you have been more interested in following your own thoughts and ways rather than the ways of God.

Enoch walked with God. You too can be in the presence of God daily and forever if you walk with him.

Things To Do

1. Have a fifteen minute quiet time every day this week. Use this time to read the Bible, to listen to good tapes about the Bible, to sing and to pray. Keep a record to share the next time you meet to show what problems came up and what particularly rewarding things happened.
2. Talk to your teacher, your pastor or to an older Christian about some of the different plans for Bible study, such as chapter by chapter, theme by theme, character study and topic study.
3. Say the Memory Verse each day substituting your own name for Israel.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FAITH OF NOAH

Aim: I will see that God expects me to obey him immediately when he gives me directions.

Background Scripture: Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 5-9

Verses in Today's Lesson: Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6:5-22

Memory Verse: "And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him" (Genesis 7:5).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Obedience! What does the word, obedience, bring to your mind? For many young people, obedience is a bad word. It is something they fight against. To give up even the smallest part of their personal freedom would be more than they could do. They feel that they have grown up and no longer have to obey. Are they right?

Our lesson today is about a man who had to obey. He had to give up his personal freedom for something God wanted him to do. The Bible story is presented in the form of a drama.

Interpretation

NOAH: Lord, did you say there will be water everywhere? Then we will all drown! What did you say? Build a boat? How big? No one has ever built a boat that big before! Take animals, too? Yes, Lord, I hear you. Very well, Lord, I will obey all your instructions. Ham! Ham!

HAM: Yes, Father, here I am. Why did you call me?

NOAH: Quick, call the family together. I have an important message from God.

HAM: Yes, Father. I will call them, but I do not understand what is going on. (All the family including Noah's wife, their three sons and their three daughters-in-law gather curiously around Noah.)

NOAH: I have just received an urgent message from God while I was praying. We are to build a boat. I see from your faces that you are surprised. But God has said he will destroy all the people by flooding the earth. He said he would save our family if we will obey him. We must begin work at once to build a large boat. We will try to warn as many people as we can. They may leave their sinful ways and come with us.

FATIMA: (The wife of Shem, Noah's son): Father Noah, are you sure that is what God told you to do? People will think we are crazy if we start building a boat that big here on dry land. I do not like to be laughed at or made fun of.

SHEM: Father, Fatima is right. We will all be called fools and idiots if we do this. None of the men I know will want to change their ways. They like fighting, cheating and stealing from others. Anyway, we will do our best to help you build

the boat. God has never failed us yet. Maybe some of the men will help us build while the women cut wood and gather food.

(They all leave discussing the message and their plans to get others to help.)

MAN OF THE TOWN (Talking to a second man): Have you heard what the sons of Noah said about a flood? They must think me an idiot to believe such a story. They are crazy! They even had the nerve to tell me I ought to change my way of living and help them build the boat!

SECOND MAN: Yes, I have heard. They have told everybody. They almost begged me to listen and pleaded that I would at least allow my children to go and help them. But I knew they were crazy. I don't want my children around them. Old Noah has always been strange. They are not like the rest of us. Let us go and see how they are doing. I hear they are almost finished with that big boat.

(They go to where Noah and his family are building the ark. They join a large crowd of people who are watching and laughing.)

GIRL IN THE CROWD: Hey, I heard that your God told you to make the boat 450 feet long. What would he do if you made it 449 feet long? I don't want any God telling me what to do!

OLD MAN IN THE CROWD: I have seen many crazy things in my time, but this is the worst yet. Noah, has your God tricked you into believing there will be a flood? I have done just what I wanted to do all my life, and no god has struck me down yet.

YOUNG BOY IN THE CROWD TALKING TO HIS MOTHER: Why are those men building a boat where there is no water? Are they mad like Father said?

MOTHER OF THE BOY: Yes, Son, they are quite mad. Noah believes he had a god speak to him. But we all know there is not such god. We cannot see him. Our gods do not speak to us. They allow us to do anything if we sacrifice often enough to them.

(The work continues for many days. Then the ark is finished.)

NOAH: Let us go out now and bring the animals that God has told us to take with us. God will help us control them so no one will be injured. I am very sad though that no one else has wanted to listen to our pleadings to repent before it is too late. God knows we have truly tried to get people to listen and turn from their sins. It seems the harder we try, the more they mock us. (Finally all the animals are led inside, and everything is ready.)

JAPHETH: Father, have we obeyed all the commandments of God?

NOAH: Yes, we have done well. Come. It is starting to rain. Let us enter the ark. God will take care of us.

Application For My Life

What would happen today if God decided to examine your thoughts and actions and those of your friends? Would he be pleased with the places you go? Would he like the words and stories in your conversations? Would he be pleased by the way you obey and respect your parents and other adults?

After his examination would God say that your thoughts and ways are continually evil in his sight? If destruction or death were to come immediately to you and all your friends, which of you would be found pleasing to God? Which of you would go directly into God's presence because of the good life you have led? If you cannot say that you would be one of the saved ones, you need to change your life to one of obedience to God.

Things To Do

1. Make a list of names of the people you must obey. Actually write their names down. Include your headmaster or supervisor, teachers, parents and other relatives.
2. This week try to give them the respect they deserve by obeying them.
3. Learn your Memory Verse. Compare your life to Noah's. Do you really do all that the Lord commands you to do?

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

Aim: I will learn to be ready to answer when God calls.

Background Scripture: Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19; Genesis 12:1-6; 22:1-19

Verses in Today's Lesson: Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19

Memory Verse: "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me'" (Isaiah 6:8).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

The following is a true story.

"It was the strangest message! Why should I get up in the middle of the night and drive to an unknown place? Yet this was what God seemed to be saying to me. I had heard the call of God before and recognized him speaking within me.

"I quickly put on my clothes and started driving my car away from the house onto a hilly road. Suddenly God seemed to be telling me to slow down as I came to the top of the hill. Just over the hill I saw a man lying on the road. The next car would surely have run over him. I was able to get the seriously injured man to the hospital, and he became well. If I had not come, the man would have been killed by the next speeding car on the road, just the way another car or lorry had already injured him."

What would have happened if the man had not listened to the call of God? If he had not obeyed quickly, what would have happened? Is God concerned about the life of just one man? Can God call me to do something? Will I obey immediately?

Interpretation

Abraham was called by God to leave the land of his birth to go to an unknown land. Although Abraham was old, he obeyed the call of God and went to live in the land of promise. He had to leave behind him the old ways of living that his relatives had and live in a new way governed by God.

The people in Abraham's old home worshipped many gods and idols. These had to be left behind. Abraham chose to listen only to the voice of God.

In the new land Abraham lived in temporary housing, tents, knowing that God alone would give him a permanent home. He was content to live day by day following the call of God. He left the past and began to live in the present with God.

Not only was Abraham asked to leave the past, he was asked to leave the future as well. God had promised Abraham that he would make of him a great nation. To do that God would have to give Abraham children because at that time he and Sarah were childless.

At times Abraham's faith was weak. He even laughed at the thought of him and Sarah having children at their advanced age. Even so, he believed that somehow

God would fulfil his promise and make him a great nation. Perhaps God would let Ishmael, Hagar's child, become the child to begin the nation.

Then when Sarah and Abraham least expected it, God gave them a son, Isaac. Abraham was overjoyed. He had his beloved son. His future as the father of a great nation was assured. Then God asked him to leave his future. He asked him to sacrifice Isaac. That meant that Abraham must take this precious child, his only son, and offer him upon an altar. Isaac had to be killed! How could Abraham be the father of a great nation if his and Sarah's only son died?

God had commanded and Abraham set about to obey. He loaded the donkey with wood for the burnt offering, commanded two servants and Isaac to go with him and began his three day journey. Imagine the thoughts of sadness that filled Abraham as he journeyed those three days. But when it was time for the sacrifice and Isaac was bound and laid on the altar, God stopped Abraham from killing his son. Abraham's future was returned to him.

Application For My Life

The story in the Introduction may seem strange and unusual. Often we think of God as being very hard to know and very far off somewhere in heaven. It seems impossible that God can and does talk with people today just as he did to people in the Bible. Has God changed? No, there are young and old in every nation who hear and respond to the voice of God speaking to them.

God calls you to leave your past way of life that did not honor him. Leave the idol worship, charms, drinking, stealing and other sinful behavior you had before God spoke to you. When the new life of Jesus conflicts with your old life, you must leave your old ways.

What would you think of someone who bought a beautiful new shirt and just put it on top of his old, dirty, ragged and torn shirt? You would think he was unwise because the new shirt will not fit properly until the old shirt is taken off. The call of God to accept Jesus is the call to put off the old ways of sin and put on the new life that is in Jesus. Each day we put on the new life of Jesus and live for him.

God also calls you to stop worrying about the future. Certainly it is good to plan for the future as long as God is involved in the planning. God calls each one of his followers to a vocation and life that is pleasing to him and joyous to them. It is foolish to make our own plans for the future without asking God's wisdom.

The parable Jesus told in Luke 12:16-21 about the foolish rich man points out this truth very clearly.

Have you considered God's plan for your life? Are you learning how to listen to God speaking to you? He might wake you in the night with a feeling of urgency to do something, like the man in the Introduction. He might speak to you in an audible voice. He might use your friends or family to tell you what he wants you to do. Most often, God gives us his directions through his precious Word. Do you read it expecting God to speak to you through it?

Have you obeyed God's call to accept Jesus as your new way of life? Will you follow Abraham's example and leave the past? Will you leave the future in God's hands? Will you seek to know his directions daily? When you begin listening to God and begin to obey him, your life will be gloriously different.

Things To Do

1. Choose a Christian you respect, perhaps your pastor or teacher. Ask if you can interview him/her concerning the way God has led in his Christian walk. Ask how God led him into the vocation that he has. Take notes.
2. Write up the interview and place it in your Bible to take to your Bible study class at its next meeting.
3. Memorize the verse for today, Isaiah 6:8. Are you ready to go anywhere God might send you? Are you ready to do what he directs you to do?

CHAPTER SIX

THE FAITH OF ISAAC

Aim: I will gain assurance that God is in control of everything, and I should have no fear.

Background Scripture: Hebrews 11:17-20; Genesis 22:1-10; 27:1-4, 27-29, 39-40

Verses in Today's Lesson: Hebrews 11:17-20

Memory Verse: "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31b).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

How much faith do you have in God? How far do you trust him? Do you believe he will do what he has said he will do? For example, do you believe he will come in and sup with anyone who opens the door to his knock? (Revelation 3:20) Or that he will open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing on those who bring their tithes into the storehouse? (Malachi 3:10) Do you believe it is his good pleasure to give you the kingdom? (Luke 12:32) When the righteous are afflicted, do you know for sure that the Lord will deliver them out of them all? (Psalms 34:19)

As followers of Christ, we have been promised many, many things. How strong is our faith? Is it strong enough to accept all these promises and to believe with complete certainty that God will do what he says he will do? If we have that kind of strong faith, we will know that our future is secure. Our Bible story for today is about a man who believed in the future. His name is Isaac.

Interpretation

The verses from Hebrews in the last lesson are the same ones in today's lesson. We will look at them from Isaac's point of view now.

These verses show that both Abraham and Isaac had great faith. Both of them had faith in the future because they had faith in God who knows the future. In the last lesson you were encouraged to leave the future in God's hands and not worry about it yourself.

As your Memory Verse today points out, there is no need to fear anything in the future when God is with us. It would be helpful to read Romans 8:31-39 to see how Paul had faith in the future because of his faith in God and his Son, Jesus.

Isaac had faith in the future because he trusted God even as his father, Abraham, did. Think again about the testing of Abraham when God asked him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. (Genesis 22:1-19) We usually think of Abraham's great faith when we read these verses. But let us think of the faith of the boy, Isaac, who was probably between ten and fifteen year old at the time. His faith can teach us about a proper attitude toward death.

As Abraham and Isaac prepared the altar for the sacrifice, Isaac must have been very puzzled. He could see the altar and the wood, but he could see no sacrificial animal. Where would Abraham find the sacrifice? Then gently Abraham told his son that he would be the one to die. Did Isaac think, "Should I run? I

know I am faster than my father since he is a very old man." This is what many of us do when we get into trouble. We run. Isaac might have thought this briefly, but instead of running he willingly allowed himself to be tied and placed on the altar to be killed.

He had faith that when he died he would be with his other loving Father, God. That was enough. Death would not be the end for Isaac, but only the gate to life forever.

The Bible story skips a long period in the life of Isaac. We see him much older with two grown sons, Esau and Jacob. He gave blessings to his sons and had faith in the future for them as well as for himself. He had grown to be a patient man of God.

Isaac had faults and failed God at times, but he continued to believe the future promises of God. He and his people were not yet a great nation, but he believed God would keep his promise.

Application For My Life.

What does the future hold for you? Are you ready for it?

All of life is full of changes. Conditions which existed only ten years ago no longer exist. The world your parents grew up in is not the world you are growing up in. People who feel qualified for a job might discover the job is no longer needed in the business world. Methods and techniques used in many professions today will be out-dated and no longer used in a very few years. The future in the business world is uncertain.

In the field of medicine, new discoveries are daily occurrences. Doctors can treat illnesses successfully now that were usually fatal a few years ago. With contamination and pollution a world-wide problem, doctors see new types of illnesses and disorders. When one becomes ill, there is no assurance that he will recover. The future in the medical world is uncertain.

With more students going to school every year, the competition for good grades and honors is stronger. A few years ago, most students who studied hard would succeed and go on to the university. This is no longer true. The future in the academic world is uncertain.

Even nations that appear strong and solid today might change and fall tomorrow. A popular politician this year may be in disgrace next year. The future in the political world is uncertain.

Where, then, is there any certainty about the future? Paul said in Romans 8 that he was ready for anything the future held because he knew that God was with him no matter what happened. His future was secure because he had Jesus. Nothing can frighten you about the future if your faith rests upon Jesus. You can have faith in your own future as well as the future of your children if you are all in the hands of God.

Have you experienced the peace that comes from surrendering your future to Jesus? If you have not, you must realize that Jesus is the only way to have the assurance of a true life in the future. Jesus said clearly in John 14:6 that he is the way, the truth and the life. Isaac's faith made him sure about the future after death and the future of his children. Are you ready for what the future holds? Things To Do

1. In your quiet time this week, examine the fears you have concerning the future.
2. Face these fears honestly and give them to God.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FAITH OF JACOB

Aim: I will understand what being a Christian really means.

Background Scripture: Genesis 25:27-34; 28:10-22; 32:22-31; 48:8-21; Hebrews 11:9-21

Verses in Today's Lesson: Genesis 27:36; 28:20-22; 32:27-28; Hebrews 11:9-21

Memory Verse: "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Do names have special meaning? Some do. In many areas Christians chose new names when they are baptized. These new names have special significance to the new Christian. Many tribes or clans give names to children to indicate the month or time of year they are born. These children may later earn new names with new meanings.

Cassius Clay is a man who won a gold medal in the Olympic games. In later years he changed his name to fit his new Muslim religion. Many people in the world know him by his name, Muhammed Ali.

Nations sometimes change their names to show a political shift.

The changing of a name can mean little or it can have a much deeper meaning. Our Bible story is about a man named Jacob. God changed his name to Israel. We will see why God chose this new name and why he changed Jacob's name.

Interpretation

Jacob means "one who takes or grabs the place of another." Two events that happened early in Jacob's life prove that his name fitted him perfectly. In Genesis 25:27-34 we can read how Jacob grabbed the privileges of the first-born son. He took what did not actually belong to him. Again in Genesis 27:1-29 we see how Jacob and his mother planned and carried out their scheme to take Esau's blessing.

It is easy to understand why Esau said Jacob deserved his ugly name because he lived like his name. Jacob himself did not mind his name and was possibly glad he was tricky enough to deserve it. He liked the way he was and had no plan to change his life.

In Genesis 27:42-44 Jacob was warned by Rebekah that Esau had plans to kill him. He had to leave his home and flee because of his brother's anger. Even then, Jacob did not regret what he had done. As he travelled, however, a significant event occurred that changed his life. He met God one night while he was sleeping.

In a dream (Genesis 28:10-22) God spoke to this grabber, telling him about the covenant relationship that existed in his family. This meeting with God began to change Jacob into a new person. He was still selfish in making conditions for

God to meet before he would serve him. But now he thought of making God the ruler of his life. He even decided to give a tithe of his possessions to God.

Jacob's old way of living gradually began to change. As Laban tricked him (Genesis 29) he realized first hand what it meant to be cheated. Instead of receiving Rachael as a wife in payment for working seven years, he was given Leah, the older sister. During his many years away from home, Jacob learned many new things about the evils of his past life. By the time he returned home, Jacob was ready for a new name because he was a new person.

In Genesis 32, Jacob began his journey home. On the way he met a "man" with whom he wrestled all night. This messenger of God gave Jacob a new name, Israel, which meant "he has struggled with God and with men and has been victorious." Jacob's new life no longer suited his old name.

Israel's faith grew as the years of his life passed. He had periods of sadness such as the time he was told his favorite son, Joseph, had been killed. Rather than being killed Joseph had been sold as a slave in Egypt where the whole family went to live later because of famine in the land. Israel's family received good land in Egypt, but Israel longed for home. God promised him that his descendants would return to Canaan, the Promised Land. Israel blessed the two sons of Joseph, giving the greater blessing to the younger son. Israel's faith in the promises of God stayed strong. He believed God would honor the future blessings of these children. A strong faith like the faith of Israel influences later generations.

Application For My Life

In some areas of Africa people are given nicknames that describe their actions. Many young people, like Jacob enjoy the tough nicknames they received and are proud of them. They like the fear or envy of others when they hear these names.

Followers of Christ have a very special name. They are called Christians. "...and in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians" (Acts 11:26b). Before that time they were called people of the way, followers of Jesus and disciples. At Antioch, these special people earned the name of Christian, which means like Christ.

Today many people call themselves Christian who have never accepted Christ as their Saviour. What they mean is that they are not atheists (people who do not believe there is a God.) They have "grabbed" the name, Christian.

Other people have accepted Christ as their Saviour, but they are carnal Christians. This means they let their old nature rule their lives. They are not Christ-like in their actions or their conversation. They, too, have grabbed the name Christian, and they do not deserve the name.

When one becomes a Christian, he is a new creation. He is born a second time by the power of God. When your friends think of you, do they think you are a different person now that you are a Christian? Maybe your old nickname does not fit your new life. You should rid yourself of old names that are meaningless and become known for your Christ-likeness.

Do you have Christ in your life? If you do not have him there, you are not a Christian. You can become new by accepting Jesus for yourself. His power in you will change you into a new person. The old will pass away, and the new will come to dwell in you.

Things To Do

1. Try to find out what your own name means if you do not know. Do you like your name?
2. Talk to people about their names and whether they have special meanings.
3. Think about what the name, Christian, means. Are you living up to that name?
4. Learn the Memory Verse for today. Is Christ really in you?

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FAITH OF SARAH

Aim: I will learn that even though I do not deserve it, God loves me.

Background Scripture: Genesis 12:10-20; 16:1-6; 18:9-15; 21:1-7; Hebrews 11:11

Verses in Today's Lesson: Genesis 12:11-13; 16:6; 18:9-15; 21:1-2; Hebrews 11:11

Memory Verse: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Hebrews 5:8).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

David and Esther had been married many years and were very happy together. David was an ambitious man and was delighted when he learned that his company wanted him to go to another country for a few years. The job was a promotion and would give him a large rise in salary. It was a wonderful opportunity. Much of David's excitement vanished, however, when he understood that Esther would not be able to go with him.

Loving him as she did, Esther wanted her husband to have what she knew he wanted. She encouraged him to take the new position. David was grateful to Esther for her sacrifice and accepted the job.

At first letters came and went frequently between the husband and wife. Then gradually David's letters became fewer and fewer. Esther continued to write faithfully and with great love. Finally a letter came to Esther which said, "We are no longer married. I have divorced you and am married to another woman here."

Although this was a terrible blow to Esther, she continued to love her ex-husband and to remain faithful to him. She was able to get news about him from some friends who lived near David. Soon she heard that David and his new wife had a child, then another. Then she heard that David had died suddenly of disease.

Esther continued to hear about the family even after David's death. She heard that the new wife had not been well provided for. The two children would not be educated very well. Remembering how much a good education meant to David, she wrote and asked if the two children could come and live with her and go to school at her expense.

The two children came. Soon after, their mother also came at Esther's invitation. All four lived together happily. People were amazed. How could Esther allow such a thing? Her love for her husband enabled her to forgive him for what he did and to accept the woman who had stolen her husband.

Are you capable of that kind of love?

God loves the unlovable. The person in our lesson today was not very lovable even though she was very beautiful. Sarah did not deserve the love of God, but God gave her his love freely. We will learn more about God as we study Sarah.

Interpretation Sarai (Sarah) was the wife of Abram (Abraham). Even though she was sixty-five years old, she was still considered a beautiful woman. Her name mean "princess."

When Sarai and Abram arrived in Egypt, Abram feared for his life. He and Sarai agreed that they would tell Pharaoh they were brother and sister, rather than husband and wife. Sarai followed through with the plan, and she ended up in the harem or place of Pharaoh's wives. God kept her from committing adultery in spite of her sin of lying to Pharaoh. This was the first recorded sin of Sarai.

Later, after her name was changed, Sarah sinned again. She did not have patience and grew tired of waiting for the child God had promised her. She decided she would have a child in another way than the one God had planned. She showed her disbelief in the promise of God by convincing Abraham to have a child with her slave girl, Hagar. By the law the child of the slave belonged to the slave's owner. In this way, Sarah assure herself she would indeed have a child. This was another sin.

When Hagar became pregnant, she became filled with pride. This angered Sarah so much that she forced the girl to run away. Sarah had sinned again.

Even though Abraham and Sarah had run ahead of God so they could have a child, God still promised them their own son. He repeated his promise often through the passing years. Sarah could not believe God could give her a child since she had passed the child-bearing years. Her faith was weak. God would have to perform a miracle if she became pregnant this late in life. She did not think he would do that. Sarah's weak faith was another sin.

One day three strange men came to Abraham's and Sarah's tent and began to talk to Abraham. He soon knew they represented God. The spokesman for the group said the long-awaited son would be born one year from that time. When they heard this, Abraham believed and rejoiced, but Sarah laughed. Sarah sinned again.

When the speaker told Sarah that she should not laugh because everything was possible with God, Sarah sinned again. She tried to cover up her sin of disbelief by saying she had not laughed. How foolish she was to think she could lie and cover her other sin!

Sin! Sin! Sin! Sarah had displayed many characteristics displeasing to God, but he continued to love her anyway. God showed his goodness by his continual kindness to her. Even though Sarah had lied, been willing to commit adultery, planned her own way to have a son, treated her slave harshly and laughed at the promise of God, he was still willing to give her a son.

Late in life, Sarah became willing to receive the gift of God. She gave birth to Isaac. Her faith had been weak, but it was strengthened by seeing how God kept his promises. God loved Sarah in spite of her faults.

Application For My Life

If we look carefully at Sarah, we can see ourselves. We often run ahead of God as she did. We think he cannot do the things he has promised, so we try to help him. We try to cover our sin when we are caught, often by lying. God loved Sarah, and he loves us.

Read the Memory Verse for today and learn it. This is the nature of God. The best gift God gave us is his Son, Jesus. No one deserves this wonderful gift

because we are weak and sinful like Sarah. God wants to give good things to his children. His love is wonderful.

Things To Do

1. Pray for others in the class this week. Ask God to increase their faith.
2. List five things you are trusting God for, and bring the list to class the next time you meet. The list may include a job, salvation, the care for family.

CHAPTER NINE

THE FAITH OF JOSEPH

Aim: I will understand that God can help me overcome any difficulties I face.

Background Scripture: Genesis 37; 39; 50; Hebrews 11:22

Verse in Today's Lesson: Genesis 37:5-8, 28; 39:20; 41:41; Hebrews 11:22

Memory Verse: "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (Romans 8:25).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

A Christian woman had a husband who liked to drink beer. He soon became dependent on it and drank all the time. When he was drunk, the husband often beat and insulted his wife. When he was sober, he would promise to stop drinking but would soon break his promise. The woman forgave him many times.

After some time the woman began to feel that what was happening was unjust. She began to ask God why her husband was like he was. In her probing, she began to see that she needed to surrender both her life and that of her husband into God's care.

After her decision to trust God, the woman waited patiently to see what he would do. Soon her husband accepted Jesus as his Saviour. With the Holy Spirit to help him, he was able to stop drinking. He began to witness about Jesus to the people with whom he had been drinking. Her patient trust in the Lord brought fulfillment of the woman's hopes.

Interpretation

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, had hopes for a happy future. His father loved him and treated him better than he did his other sons. Joseph had exciting dreams which showed that he would be a great man one day. In one dream, Joseph saw his brothers and parents bowing down to him. He could hardly wait to tell this dream to his brothers.

Joseph's young life was happy, and he believed that all his hopes and dreams would come true. In his pride, he failed to see that his brothers did not enjoy hearing about his dreams. He did not realize they were hurt over the favoritism their father, Israel, showed Joseph.

One day Israel sent Joseph to see his brothers when they were in the fields. When he approached, they seized him and planned to kill him. After some debate by the brothers, the idea finally came to sell him as a slave. They would be rid of the boastful dreamer and would have some money too.

In Egypt, Joseph was sold again to an important soldier named Potiphar. Now the hopes and dreams of Joseph began to seem impossible to him. He continued to trust God, though, and waited to see what would happen. During the years as a slave, Potiphar trusted him because he was wise and worked hard. Although Joseph was a slave, he trusted God to help him do his best as a slave.

One day the wife of Potiphar tried to persuade Joseph to commit adultery with her. Joseph refused because of his love for God and his desire to please God. The rejected woman was furious. She told Potiphar that Joseph was trying to seduce her. Potiphar threw Joseph into prison.

Joseph did not give up his hopes even though he was a prisoner. He continued to do his best and soon became a trusted helper in the prison. Even after he correctly interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, he continued to stay in prison. Two more years passed and Joseph continued to have patience waiting for God to help him.

Then Pharaoh had two dreams that no one could interpret. The chief butler finally remembered Joseph, and they called for him. Pharaoh told his dreams to Joseph who correctly interpreted them. In his explanation, Joseph advised Pharaoh to choose a wise man to prepare the land for a coming crisis. Imagine his surprise when Pharaoh said Joseph would be that wise man!

Joseph's youthful dreams became true when his father and brothers bowed before him asking for famine relief. Joseph's hopes were finally realized.

Many years later as he lay dying, Joseph remembered the promises of God to give the descendants of Abraham the land of Canaan. As Joseph and his relatives were living in Egypt, he must have had faith to believe what he could not see. He believed God's promise so strongly that he made his people promise that someday they would take his bones to be buried in the land of promise. Hundreds of years later his bones were taken and buried in Canaan.

Joseph's early hopes and dreams had been partially fulfilled when he became a ruler in Egypt. But the fulfillment of the promise of God would come late to Joseph's descendants. Just as he waited patiently for thirteen years to see how God would turn evil to good, he waited even in death to be taken to the Promised Land.

Application For My Life

As a young person you have hopes for the future. Sometimes these hopes seem to be crushed by events in life. When the troubles come, will you give up your hopes, or will you patiently trust God to use the bad to bring forth good? The Christian woman with the drunkard husband saw that God could bring good out of bad. Joseph saw God bring good from bad also.

What will happen when difficulties come to you? You may become discouraged and fail to fulfil your plans in life. You may wait patiently doing your best no matter what the problems may be. Joseph was able to wait patiently because his faith was in God. He knew God could help him accomplish his hopes and dreams. When God shows you his plans for your life, he will enable you to accomplish them even though problems might come. The patience of Joseph can be a guide for your own patience as you wait for the fulfillment of your hopes and dreams for the future.

Things To Do 1. List some areas of your life where you have dreams, but you do not yet know the Lord is going to provide for you. Pray that God will give you patience to wait for his answer for every situation listed.

2. Learn your Memory Verse for today. Be sure to learn where it is found in the Bible.

CHAPTER TEN

THE FAITH OF MOSES

Aim: I will realize that God has given me the freedom of choice.

Background Scripture: Exodus 1-20; Hebrews 11:23-29

Verses in Today's Lesson: Hebrews 11:23-29

Memory Verse: "And the world passes away, and the lust of it, but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Of all God's creation, only mankind was given the freedom to make choices. Instinct drives the rest of God's creatures. Animals eat when food is available. They sleep when they become tired, no matter the hour. They mate with the animal nearest them in most cases. Only man chooses.

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, they chose badly. God had made life very easy for them. As long as they chose to obey him, they could live in the lovely garden of Eden. The choice was theirs. God wanted them to choose to obey him, but they chose not to obey him.

We make choices every day. Most of them are not important. We choose which shirt to wear, what to eat, whether to read a book or visit a friend, where to sit when we enter a room. There are many choices.

We must also make the big decisions of life. We must decide which school to attend, which occupation to enter, which partner to marry, where to live, our friends, which religion we will follow. God has let us make these choices. How well do we choose? Do we allow God to direct us in these big decisions?

Our Bible story today is about Moses, a man who had to choose many times.

Interpretation

After the death of Joseph, the Hebrew people continued to live happily in Egypt and multiplied rapidly. After many generations the Egyptians began to fear the Hebrews because of their great number and strength. A Pharaoh began to rule who forgot how Joseph had helped the Egyptians many years before. The Hebrews were forced to become slaves, and the Egyptians became their master. Still the Hebrews multiplied in number.

More years passed and another Pharaoh decided the only way to stop the growth of the Hebrew nation was to have all the male babies killed. Even this did not work because the Hebrew mid-wives refused to kill the new-born baby boys. Then the Pharaoh ordered all the Egyptians to kill every male child by throwing them into the Nile River.

The beautiful story of how Moses was saved by his parents and sister is told in Exodus 2. They tried to keep the little boy hidden, and they were successful for three months. Then another plan came to mind when he was too old to be hidden in the house. They would hide him in a basket in the river.

The daughter of Pharaoh saw the basket and ordered it brought to her. The crying of the child and its helplessness brought a motherly feeling to the young woman. She said he would be her son, and from that day Moses was saved. He lived in Pharaoh's house, but he heard stories of his own people from his real mother who served as his nursemaid.

When Moses became a man, he was faced with a choice. Should he continue as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter? If he did, he would have all the riches and power available to a close relative of the king. Or should he identify himself with his own people in slavery? Moses chose his own people, the Hebrews.

Moses tried to show his people that he would help them become free from slavery and injustice. He killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew. Later when he tried to settle an argument between two Hebrews, they rejected his help. He began to fear that he would not be able to help his people. He had no plan that would help at this point, so he decided to flee the land.

While Moses lived in the land of Midian, Pharaoh died. Moses could now return to Egypt safely to help his people. God was also ready to use Moses to deliver his people from Egypt.

God spoke to Moses in a dramatic way through a bush that was burning. God gave instructions on how Moses would speak to Pharaoh and to the Hebrew people. Both Pharaoh and the Hebrews doubted that Moses was speaking with God.

Pharaoh changed his mind many times about whether or not to let the Hebrews leave. The Hebrews complained to Moses. God used a series of plagues to show his power to the Egyptians and his love to the Hebrew people.

It was a great event when the people of God left Egypt and moved toward the Promised Land. God led the people to a place where water was on one side and desert on the other. It appeared that the Hebrews were trapped. Pharaoh, upon hearing their position, decided to force them to return to Egypt. God used this opportunity to show his power to protect the Hebrew people. He told Moses to lift his staff and stretch forth his hand. When he did, the waters parted, and the Hebrews walked across on dry land. Moses chose to trust God for his instructions, and he was able to lead his people out of slavery.

Application For My Life

Often you will be asked to make choices. Some will be easy, but others will be hard. Sometimes it will be easier to do what others do than to do what you know God wants you to do. The pleasures of sin last a short while, but the choices that are pleasing to God last forever.

Moses had to choose what to do in his life. He would choose to follow God. The first act in disobedience to God, lying, cheating, stealing, drinking, smoking, cursing, hating will make the next occasion even easier to disobey. Doing God's will leads to lasting happiness and joy, but Satan wants you to choose to follow him. First Peter 5:9-10 says that we can choose to resist the devil and receive help of God. How do you choose? Be like Moses and choose God's ways which will lead to eternal rewards.

Things To Do

1. On each of three sheets of paper, write a subject about which you must choose. Then write a choice that would please God. List underneath the possible

results of that choice. Then write a bad choice you could make. List possible results of that choice. Which choice will you make regarding that situation?

Example: SMOKING

To please God, don't smoke.

Results: Better health, more money, pleasing God.

To please Satan, smoke. Results: Bad health, stained teeth, financial problems, displeasing God.

What choice will I make? I will not smoke.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FAITH OF RAHAB

Aim: I will learn that God expects both faith and works.

Background Scripture: Joshua 1-6; Hebrews 11:30-31; James 2:24-25

Verses in Today's Lesson: Hebrews 11:30-31; Joshua 2:1-24; 6:22-25; James 2:24-25

Memory Verse: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

The good news of the Gospel of John contains a beautiful story of Jesus and a woman caught in adultery. Jesus' love is shown very clearly in the story as he accepts and forgives the woman just as she was. Meeting Jesus transformed her whole life. Recognizing Jesus as Lord of her life, she was able to follow the command of Jesus to go and sin no more. Faith came first, then action resulted.

The story of Rahab is similar to this one. Both women led sinful lives before they met God in faith. Our Bible story today tells the history of this remarkable Old Testament woman, Rahab.

Interpretation

Moses led the people of God out of slavery in Egypt. The people alternatively obeyed and disobeyed God. Their sin became so great that God did not allow the adults who failed to trust him to enter the Promised Land. They wandered in the desert for forty years until they died.

Those who believed and all the children who had grown up during the long years of wandering were ready to enter the land of Canaan. Joshua had become their leader after Moses' death.

The first city to be conquered in the land of promise was the forfeited city of Jericho. Joshua sent two spies to investigate and report to him. Entering the city, they found a place to stay near the gate in the house of a harlot, Rahab. While she and the two spies were talking, soldiers came searching for the spies. Rahab hid them quickly and gave false information to the soldiers about where they were.

The two Hebrew spies were relieved but puzzled about why Rahab would save their lives. Rahab explained her actions to them. She along with all the people of Jericho had heard about the Hebrew people God had delivered from slavery in Egypt. They had heard about the miracles God had performed for them along the way. She told them she knew their God was the true God.

Rahab believed God would help the Hebrews defeat Jericho. She believed this so strongly that the men promised to save her and her family when they actually captured the city. Then she told them how to leave safely and helped them get outside the city wall. Read Joshua 2:15.

The amazing ways God helped his people cross the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14-17) and capture Jericho (Joshua 6:1-21) strengthened the faith of all the people. When the walled city was destroyed, the two men kept their promise to Rahab and led her and those with her to safety.

Rahab's faith saved the spies from certain death. Her faith was the reason she did not perish with the unbelievers in Jericho. Her faith was clearly seen when she told the spies her belief, "...the Lord your God is he who is God in heaven and on earth beneath" (Joshua 2:11b). Her faith in God came before any actions that showed her faith. God accepted her just as she was, and then her life changed.

James 2:24-25 tells us that faith shows itself in action. Because of Rahab's action in protecting the spies and showing them how to avoid capture, she and all those with her were rescued when the city of Jericho was destroyed.

Application For My Life

Rahab had both faith and actions which demonstrated her faith. Her acceptance of God included both. Faith came first in salvation as God accepted and forgave the past life she had lived. An inner change brought changes in outward actions.

No one can win the love of God by doing good acts alone. Salvation is not earned but is given as a gift to those who have faith. When the inner change comes through faith, actions begin because God gives strength inside.

Are you depending on your faith to save you when you have no good works? You say you believe in Jesus and you say you love God. But you continue in sexual sin, in lying, in cursing, in drinking, in envy, in gossip and in a multitude of other actions displeasing God.

Or, are you very proud of yourself because you do not steal, lie or drink beer, and you always go to church? However, you do not really accept Jesus as your Saviour.

Neither of these is right. If you fit into either category, you need to be concerned. If you answered the first question yes, then your lack of actions shows that an inner change of faith has not taken place. If you answered the second question affirmatively, your actions show only that you wish to appear to be a good person. Faith and works go together. They cannot be separated.

Jesus told the woman caught in adultery to go and sin no more after she recognized him as Lord by faith. Today you need to examine your own life to see if you truly have faith in Jesus and that this faith is being expressed by actions pleasing to him.

Rahab received salvation through faith which showed itself in actions. Are you saved in God's sight? Have you received his salvation in Jesus as a gift offered to you? If not, receive Jesus today. He will change your life.

Things To Do

1. Name five actions you could do to show the love of Jesus Christ that is in your heart.

2. Ask the Lord to show you some of your own actions that are not pleasing to him.

3. Pray that he will forgive you for those sins and help you to do the things that will let other people know that he lives in you.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE FAITH OF OTHERS

Aim: I will know that the Holy Spirit will give me the courage to live for Jesus and to tell others about him.

Background Scripture: Judges 4-7; 11-16; 1 Samuel 1; 16:1-13; Hebrews 11:32-40

Verses in Today's Lesson: Hebrews 11:32-40

Memory Verse: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

A reporter from a newspaper was covering an event that was receiving much publicity. Many young people were being baptized in a celebration of loving obedience to Jesus.

The reporter was speaking to a radiant girl who had just been baptized. He was amazed at her joyous spirit. The girl's replies to his questions were always full of love for Jesus. She then asked the reporter, "Do you know Jesus yourself?"

The shocked reporter was amazed now at the power of the question which made him realize his own sin and need for Jesus. Soon after this conversation, the reporter also received Jesus into his heart and was baptized. The witness to Jesus of the young girl was evidence of the power of God in her life. The power of God is the person of the Holy Spirit.

The power of God is shown many times in the lives of people mentioned in the Scripture reading. The Bible calls the power of God the third person of the Trinity who is the Holy Spirit. Let us look at his work in the lives of some people in the Bible.

Interpretation

In our lesson from Hebrews the writer continues giving examples of people who have demonstrated powerful faith. He could have listed many more than he did. God's power to work is illustrated in the life of each person mentioned.

Gideon was the youngest child in a poor family. The Holy Spirit changed him into a successful military leader. (See Judges 6:34.) Read Gideon's exciting story in Judges 6-7.

The history of the people of Israel during the period of the judges was a series of rebellions against God. From time to time God allowed their enemies to triumph over them. Then God by the Holy Spirit would raise up a leader to deliver them when they repented. Barak was such a leader. With the power of God, he was able to defeat a large army containing nine hundred chariots of iron. For this great battle, Barak used only young men who were poorly armed. You will find this story in Judges 4-5.

The solitary figure of Samson became greatly feared by the Philistine rulers because of his great strength. He was born as the answer to a promise from God, and he was dedicated to God. The source of his power was identified as the Holy Spirit in Judges 13:25; 14:6, 19 and 15:14. God used Samson even though he was prone to sin, especially adultery. Read Judges 13-16.

Jepthah is another example of how God raised up a man to defeat the enemies of Israel. Judges 11 and 12 tell his story. The power of service in the work of God always comes from the Holy Spirit.

David might be the most well known of all Old Testament characters. The shepherd boy who became the great king of Israel is a familiar story. This man, described as a man "after God's own heart," is the inspiration for thousands of people. The secret of his power was the Holy Spirit. When Samuel anointed David as the future king in Israel, 1 Samuel 16:13 says the Spirit of God came upon him from that day on. In Psalms 51:11 after David's sin with Bathsheba, he prayed that the Lord would not take the Holy Spirit from him. David knew where his own power came from.

The miraculous birth of Samuel followed the earnest prayers of Hannah, his mother. When a previously barren woman was given a child, it was usually because God planned that the child would be great in the service of God. Other examples are Isaac, Samson and John the Baptist. Hannah was so grateful for Samuel that she gave him to the priest, Eli, so Samuel would serve God all his life.

Hebrews 11:33-38 tells the results of the power of the Holy Spirit's working in the lives of people of faith. Joshua and David are examples of those who conquered kingdoms. The enforcers of justice include the judges and kings like David and Solomon. Receivers of promises include all the judges like Gideon as well as kings like David and prophets like Elijah. Daniel is the one who stopped the mouths of lions. Read Daniel 16:21-23. The quenchers of fire would be Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego. (Daniel 3:19-25) Both Elijah and Elisha were saved from being killed by the sword. (1 Kings 19 and 2 Kings 6:31-33) Many became strong after being weak, such as Gideon and Hezekiah.

Examples of men strong and mighty in war include all the judges as well as the kings who obeyed God. Hezekiah, through prayer, put an army to flight. (2 Kings 19:20-37) The widow of Zarephath through the power of Elijah and the Shunammite woman through the power of Elisha are examples of women receiving their dead back alive. (1 Kings 17:8-24 and 2 Kings 4:18-37)

Many prophets were tortured and imprisoned such as Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 20 and 37-38) The prophet, Zachariah, was stoned to death by his own people. (2 Chronicles 24:20-22)

Hebrews 11:35b-38 gives a summary of the treatment Israel and the evil world gave the Hebrew prophets. None of these men of faith actually saw the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. Their faith looked forward to his coming. How fortunate for us that our faith now can know and bear witness of Jesus.

Application For My Life

Do you speak of Jesus in your conversation with others? Your faith does not include God's power of the Holy Spirit if you do not. The Holy Spirit is the power of God living in the lives of Christians to equip them for good works.

The promise of the Holy Spirit for the Christian in Acts 1:8 (your Memory Verse) is the promise of power to serve God. This power is lacking in the lives of many Christians today. This is why we hesitate to speak to others of Jesus. Study the book of Acts to see the difference the Holy Spirit can make. Then study Luke 11:9-13 to find out how we can continually have the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Things To Do

1. Ask God to show you the condition of your life related to his power.
2. Study Acts and Luke 11:9-13 prayerfully as directed in the Application above.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE FAITH OF TODAY

Aim: I will be encourage to run the Christian race of faith.

Background Scripture: Hebrews 11:1-40; 12:1-2

Verses in Today's Lesson: Hebrews 12:1-2

Memory Verse: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2a).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Mr. Mee Runs a Race, a book written by Daniel Gyane and Godfred Bamfo and published by Africa Christian Press, tells a story of a man who began to run the Christian race when he was saved. He made rapid progress at first, but then he realized that he was running in his best clothes and shoes. He had to lay aside wrong equipment for the race.

Mr. Mee soon realized that he was wearing out in the long race. He needed the encouragement of Christian friends and God's Word. Mr. Mee continued to run, still learning new ways of running the race of faith.

The beautiful climax to this series of lessons from Hebrews 11 comes in the first two verses of Hebrews 12. We have studied the great heroes of faith. We are now encouraged to run our own race of faith as a Christian. The writer of Hebrews tells us how to do this best.

Interpretation

Everyone who is to begin the most important race in the world must qualify to enter. There is only one simple qualification. Each person must accept Jesus as God and put their trust in him. When Jesus is received by faith, the person begins the race. The race has an end or a goal. Each runner is constantly moving toward the presence of Jesus. He is gradually moving toward being like the Son of God. At the end of the race, eternal life is the prize.

There are many spectators to cheer the Christian along in the race. These spectators have run the race and have received their prize. Their examples and encouragement help us know best how to run the race and finish it.

Abel helps us to know that we must always give out best to the race. Enoch teaches us that we must walk daily with God to receive his strength. Noah teaches us that obedience to God is essential. God's call must be heard just as Abraham listened and followed God's leading. The faith of Isaac showed the future is not to be feared. Jacob's new name reminds us of our need for a new life.

God loves us as we are just as he loved Sarah. Hopes and dreams can come true for us as they did for Joseph. You can choose to follow only God as Moses did. Our past sins are forgiven just as Rahab's were. The powerful lives of judges,

kings and prophets can remind us of the need of the Holy Spirit to give power and strength for the race. The men and women of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 are only a few of the millions who are encouraging us in our race. Application For My Life

Just as Mr. Mee in the story must change his clothes to run the race well, all Christians must have new lives. The old ways of living must be changed to actions pleasing to God. Many Christians cling to old sins after becoming Christians and wonder why they make little progress in their race of faith.

As God convicts of sins, they must be confessed and forsaken. Those sins are like weights slowing us down in the great race. Everything that is displeasing to God must be given up. All the old ways stand in the way of our running at our fastest. These handicaps must be thrown off.

There are many who try to run the Christian race with their own determination and will. They start out fast and then tire as their strength becomes weak. Everyone who begins the Christian race must be determined to last to the end. The determination needed is not a natural gift but a gift from God to trust in him to keep us running in the race.

We need God's strength every day. We get it through study of the Bible, prayer, fellowship with other Christians and service to others.

When running this race we have a tremendous help. There is one who is both leading us in front and running alongside us to give us strength. This is Jesus who is the pioneer or leader helping to make the race easier by leading us through the difficult times and encouraging us when we are weak. Jesus is like a guide who clears the way for us. He is also like a friend who helps another who is weak or is temporarily injured.

Jesus shows us in his own life that the race is moving toward a great joy. In his own race he endures suffering, shame and death to receive the joyful gift that God has waiting for him.

When we look to Jesus in our Christian race, we will not stumble and fall. We must keep our eyes fixed on him, allowing the spectators of faith to inspire us. Then we can turn away from sin and receive the determination that God gives us. Jesus is the one who will enable us to finish the race and receive the crown of life that is waiting for us.

The Christian race is the most important race you will ever enter. Remember that to enter you must first accept Jesus as God and put your faith in him alone. The Christian life is the most exciting life possible for any to live. The life of a Christian is not sad but happy as Jesus turns our tears into joy.

You may think you are enjoying your present life away from God and the ways of Jesus. Sin may be pleasing for a time, but it will not last. You will end up a sad, lonely person who has never realized what true joy and pleasures are. The pleasures of a life pleasing to God will last forever. They are not temporary.

Join in the race by following Jesus. You will never regret your decision. The heroes of faith led the way, and we can follow their examples.

Things To Do

1. Claim God's strength for your own race of faith.

2. Read all you can find about the Holy Spirit.

3. Promise God that you will witness to at least one person about Jesus this week in the power of the Holy Spirit.