

FAITH OF THE ANCIENTS (Hebrews 11:6-30)

INTRODUCTION

1. One of the greatest difficulties we have in our efforts to help people to become mature Christians is to help them to understand that Christianity is not like a business, but is based on faith.
2. We cannot understand everything about the whys and the reasons we do certain things in living a faithful Christian life.
 - A. According to the thinking of men, the **Macedonians** should not have been able to give anything to the support of the gospel because of their poverty (2 Cor. 8:1-5).

“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God” (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

- B. **Gideon** with just 300 men should never have been able to win the battle against the Midianites (Judges 6,7).
 - C. How could just 12 apostles have so much influence on the world? (Mt. 28:19,20; Mk. 16:15,16; Col. 1:23).
 3. The church is affected by the world or society in which we live.
 - A. We must be careful not to allow the world to dictate the direction that the church should go.
 - B. We must not let the world keep us from having faith in the God that is all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere.
 - C. In so many cases, if people had followed the advice of the world, there would be no world. (Remember Noah’s day).
 - D. But because people had great faith in God, and put their trust in God, we have the privilege to be here today. And we also have the opportunity to put our faith to the test.
 4. Heb. 11:3; 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 Cor. 1:25.

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear”

(Hebrews 11:3).

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1:25).

- A. These verses say it all.
- B. In order to receive the blessings of God, we must trust in God, and have great faith as did the ancients. We cannot let the world make the decisions for us.
- C. Maybe we have not emphasized enough the importance of faith.
 - a. Not just faith, GREAT FAITH!
 - b. We have emphasized faith without works is dead!
 - c. Works without faith is just as dead.
 - d. For the church to grow as it should, it takes great faith.
- 5. In this lesson we will look at some of the men who would not allow the world to keep them from doing what they knew they had to do.

I. NOAH HAD GREAT FAITH.

- A. It took a great deal of faith for Noah to build the Ark.
 - a. Nobody else was building an ark.
 - b. It had never rained before.
 - c. There was no body of water near enough to use the ark in.
 - d. People were no doubt making fun of him.
 - e. It would take a lot of time and a lot of hard work for Noah to do this job.
- B. Why then did Noah build the Ark? (Heb. 11:7).

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Hebrews 11:7).

- a. Because God told him to.
- b. Because he believed in God.
- C. People ask us, “Do you believe in God?”
 - a. We all say, “Yes.”
 - b. But if people ask, “Do you believe in God as much as Noah did?” then how would you answer?
- D. If God asked you to sacrifice today, would you do it? Or would you say, “I am sorry, but I am too busy with school, or work, etc.”

II. ABRAHAM HAD GREAT FAITH.

- A. There are several things that happened in the life of Abraham that required great faith.
- B. First, God told him to leave his home and go to a place that he had never seen (Gen. 12:1-3).

“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).

- a. He hadn't even seen a picture of the place.
- b. This required GREAT FAITH.
- C. He was commanded to take the life of his son Isaac, the son of promise.
 - a. Here was the son that God promised would cause Abraham to be the father of a great nation, and that through this son all nations of the earth would be blessed.
 - b. It took great faith to take that son up the mountain and raise the knife that would take his life.
 - c. Heb. 11:19 tells us that Isaac was already dead in his heart. He believed that God would raise him from the dead to fulfill his promise.

“Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Hebrews 11:19).

- d. Abraham had great faith.
- D. Why didn't Abraham use the excuses that everybody uses to get out of doing these things?
 - a. “To go from Ur to Canaan is too far.”
 - b. “It is not convenient to go.”
 - c. “Why did God do this to me?”
 - d. “That is too great a sacrifice.”
- E. Why did Abraham make all the sacrifices that he made? (Heb. 11:10,13-16).

“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed

that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:10,13-16).

III. JOSEPH HAD GREAT FAITH.

- A. I am sure that when Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery they had no idea how Joseph would end up.
- B. I am also sure that while Joseph was in jail, it took a great deal of faith to believe that God was watching over him.
- C. Joseph would not commit adultery with Potiphar’s wife because he knew it was wrong (Gen. 39:1-9).

“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9).

- a. Why didn’t he say, “Everybody’s doing it.”
- b. Why didn’t he say, “I’m too young to know any better.”
- D. Joseph believed that one day the Israelites would go back to the land of promise, though he never would see it with his own eyes (Heb. 11:22). This also required great faith.

“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones” (Hebrews 11:22).

IV. MOSES HAD GREAT FAITH.

- A. According to the standards of the world, Moses had a great life.
 - a. He lived in Pharaoh’s palace.
 - b. The best food, clothes, etc.
 - c. Why did he give it all up? (vs. 26).

“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Hebrews 11:26).

- B. What kind of life did he take on?
 - a. Out into the wilderness.

- b. Leading the people as they complained.
- c. Giving up the good life.
- d. Risking the anger of Pharaoh (vs. 27). GREAT FAITH!

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27).

V. ISRAEL HAD GREAT FAITH.

- A. We know that there were times when Israel hardened their hearts and refused to obey God.
- B. But the Bible also mentions the great faith of Israel.
 - a. Crossing the Red Sea (Heb. 11:29).

“By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned” (Hebrews 11:29).

- b. Causing the walls of Jericho to fall (Heb. 11:30).

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days” (Hebrews 11:30).

- c. It took great faith to do both.

VI. GREAT FAITH IN THE CHURCH.

- A. Think of the men in the first century church who, through their faith, overcame all obstacles.
 - a. Christ.
 - b. The apostles.
 - c. Steven.
 - d. Barnabas.
- B. We know of many in the church in recent years who, through their faith, set the example for all of us to follow.
 - a. Their motto was: Phil. 4:13.
 - b. They were able to accomplish great things because they had great goals (Phil. 3:12-14).

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ

Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14).

CONCLUSION

1. These examples of faith were not put in the Bible by accident. They are there to encourage us to follow them. To have great faith. To live a faithful Christian life. To make sacrifices. To do the seemingly impossible task.
2. There are going to be many obstacles that we are going to have to overcome. This is true in our personal lives, as well as a congregation.
3. Little faith cannot overcome great obstacles. We must have great faith.
4. So many times in the first century, Jesus rebuked the disciples because of their “little faith.” Finally, it was their great faith that caused the gospel to spread throughout the world. It was their great faith that overcame the persecution and opposition.
5. Let's not concentrate on what we can't do, let's concentrate of what we can do, through our faith.
6. Little faith will produce occasional attendance at service, small amount given to the support of the work of the church, complaining about doing more than we are able to do financially, and not helping in the work that needs to be done.
7. May God help each one of us to Increase our faith!
8. Invitation.