

Hello everyone, happy Monday!!! Hope this note finds you all well and enjoying your summer. I do invite you to listen to this sermon on line at www.pricescreekcob.com as it is better spoken(at least I think so).

I would also like to invite you to our church picnic on Sunday Sept. 1 (Labor Day Sunday). It will be following Sunday School at Dean and Lea Millers House. (You can follow someone if you don't know where they live). Please bring a cover dish with food in it (There are some smart-alecs out there) meat and beverages will be provided.

Food, fun and fellowship for all!!!

God bless you and have a great week!

Pastor Don

“Faith in Action” Hebrews 11:1-16 August 11, 2013

An atheist was fishing in Scotland when suddenly he was attacked by the Loch Ness Monster. The monster flipped his boat up in the air and waited to catch the man in its mouth when he came down. The man cries out to God, Oh God please help me. Suddenly time stops and the man is hanging in mid air. God speaks and says to the man I thought you did not believe in me? To which the man answers please give me a break will you; until a minute ago, I did not believe in the Loch Ness Monster either!

Someone once said little faith will bring your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul.

J. Hudson Taylor once said we don't need great faith; we need faith in a great God.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee says that when a farmer prays for a good crop, God expects him to say amen with a hoe! Why? Because according to China missionary J.O. Fraser, faith is like a muscle, it grows stronger and stronger with use. Paul tells us in Romans 10:17 “That faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” Do we listen to God's word? Do we exercise our faith? Do we put our faith to action?

James tells us that faith without works is dead. Jesus tells us that if we have faith the size of a grain of mustard seed we can move mountains. What do we do with our faith?

By faith, Noah built an ark. Abraham started a nation. Daniel was protected in the lions den. The Hebrew children conquered the fiery furnace.

But some people don't have as much faith as they say they do. In 1958 the Boeing Company had just released the 707 jet engines. A passenger on a propeller driven DC-6 airplane struck up a conversation with another passenger, an engineer at Boeing. He quickly talked up their new jet engine, explaining all about the testing and experiences from the B-17 to the B-52's. Asked if he himself had ridden in one yet, he replied he wanted to wait until it has been in service for a while. Enthusiastic talking about faith is not the same thing as stepping out on it. Are we willing to step out on faith? We walk by faith and not by sight. How is our faith this morning?

Faith means we believe that what we hope for has already happened. 1 John 5:14-15 says "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we've asked of him." God always hears and answers our prayers. Sometimes we don't like the answer. Sometimes God says yes, but He also tells us no. And sometimes he says later. We hate that answer don't we? Wait a while. We don't like to wait. But if we have faith and if we wait, things will be better than we could ever imagine. God's timing is always perfect. Do we trust God? Do we wait for His perfect timing? The author of Hebrews tells us that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. What are we hoping for? Do we trust God for it?

Are we stepping out on our faith and putting it into action?

Would you pray with me as we begin this morning's message? {Pray}

Hebrews 11 is known as the faith chapter. The author of Hebrews begins the faith chapter with a definition of faith; "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Vs1 is also a description of faith in action. The word substance means "essence" or "reality". So the author is telling us that if we have faith, then we treat the things we hope for as if they are a reality; as if they have already happened. Evidence means proof. Faith itself proves that what is unseen is real. 2Cor.5:7 says that "we walk by faith, not by sight." 2Cor. 4:18 continues that thought "while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which *are* not seen are eternal."

The book of Hebrews was written to the Jewish believers. This faith chapter is very important to them because they were becoming quite discouraged and thinking about returning to Judaism. The Jewish leaders put a lot of pressure on the believers. Many were ready to leave the

unfamiliar, troubled, narrow path of faith for the more familiar comfortable & known life of works and moral effort. They were deciding if they wanted to return to a complicated religious system or remain in a simple loving relationship with Jesus. They had to decide if they wanted to depend on keeping the law or if they wanted to depend on Jesus; if they wanted to appease God or trust Him; which do we want to do?

The writer starts making his point about the superiority of faith in Hebrews 10:19-22 “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

²¹ and *having* a High Priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” In the 20 verses preceding Hebrews 11, the author has laid out why faith is the best system. He has showed how we can boldly come to the throne of grace through the blood of Jesus; how we no longer need a middle man as Jesus is now our high priest. Eph. 2:8-9 tells us “for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God,⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.” We come to God by faith in the blood of Jesus; His blood cleans us from all sin, past, present and future. We no longer need a high priest to make blood sacrifices for us. The blood of an animal can’t take away the sin of a human. The sacrificial system was a picture of Jesus and what He was coming to do. Now that He has come and done it; animal sacrifices are no longer necessary. We are now under grace and not the law. The law still teaches us how to live a moral and ethical life, but now we obey it out of love for God and not as way to get to heaven. Jesus is the only way to heaven; we obey him because we love Him not to earn His love. Our faith will give us a good testimony just like it did the elders before us. Faith teaches us that God spoke the world into existence. Faith is never easy; it is not easy to trust something you can not see, but we know God is real, alive and that He loves us and has a plan for us. Faith is simply trusting God totally.

We may not know what the future holds but we know who holds the future. Faith is moving ahead in love clinging to God’s hand. Are we living life faithfully?

Beginning with vs. 4, the author gives us a history lesson on faith. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice to God than Cain did. Abel gave his sacrifice out of love and obedience where Cain gave because he felt it as his duty. Why do we give?

Abel was Adam and Eve’s 2nd son, but his faith is mentioned first. Offering a sacrifice of any kind to God requires faith. Able loved God and put his faith in him. Abel’s faith still speaks to us thru the scriptures. We always put our faith in the one we love. Who do we love? Who do we trust? Who do we put our faith in?

[5] Enoch walked with God and then he was no more. God called him home. Enoch did not die a physical death, he was translated, he was taken to heaven without having to experience death.

Elijah was also taken to heaven without having to experience physical death. Christian who are alive when Jesus returns will experience this translation as well. Enoch and Elijah pleased God. Do we?

[6] The author tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God. But simply believing that God exists is not faith. James tells us that even the demons believe and they tremble. We need to diligently seek him. Do we diligently seek God? Do we work hard to get close to God? Do we simply believe that He is? Or do we walk with Him? Do we have faith? Diligent faith leads to a personal relationship with Jesus. Do we have one?

Noah did; and Noah also pleased God. [7] Gen.6: 8 tells us that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Vs.9 tells us that Noah was a just man and that he also walked with God. Have we found grace in the eyes of the Lord? Are we walking with Him?

Would we have the faith to build an ark in an area that contains no large body of water? This was quite an undertaking of faith. No only were there no large bodies of water around; no rain had ever fallen upon the earth. It took him about 120 years to build this ark; a box-like floating home for him, his family and 2 of every kind of animal. God said make it out of gopher wood and told him how to build it. It was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. These dimensions made it very stable upon the water. It had 3 levels inside and lots of separate rooms. God knows what he is doing. The Ark was 6 times longer than it was wide; modern ship builders use this same ratio. It had over 1 million cubic feet of space; roughly the same cargo room as 522 standard box cars. It wasn't as crowded as we would think. God provided everything Noah and his charges would need. All they had to do was obey. Faith makes us obedient. Do we obey God? Do we have great faith? Do we want great faith?

Notice that Noah stuck to his task longer than most people live these days. Do we stick to the tasks God gives us? Even when people laugh at us or insult us or make fun of us?

Noah did not worry about all the details. He did what he was told and God took care of the rest. Like how did all those animals get to the ark? God brought them. We need to imitate Noah in the fact that we do what we are told. That we stick with our task until we complete it and that we let God do the rest.

While building this ark, we can figure that Noah was also telling everyone about God and the coming flood. People chose not to believe him then just like some people choose not to believe us today when we tell them about Jesus. Whether or not they believe is their choice, we still are commanded to tell. Noah's faith and obedience were rewarded when he and his family were the only ones to survive the flood. The fate of the world was sealed when God called Noah and the others into the ark and then shut the door.

One week later the rain began and destroyed all living flesh except those safely in the ark. Noah was an heir of righteousness through his faith. Do we put our faith in action?

[8] Abraham is called the father of the Hebrew religion. Abraham also loved God and walked with Him. Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Would we be willing to leave our family, friends and home to follow God when he tells us to move but doesn't say where we are to move to? Abraham did. He left everything and followed God. He never quit. He never retreated. He followed all the way.

[9-10] Abraham lived where Israel would be. Isaac and Jacob lived with him, due to the fact they weren't born yet. They lived in tents as foreigners in a strange land. God's plans sometimes take a long time to materialize. It would be many, many years and several generations before the Israelites would become a nation & settle in the Promised Land. Abraham's ultimate Promised Land is the same as ours, heaven, God himself is its builder and maker. Jesus promises believers a home there built specifically for them by his own hand. John 14:2-3 "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto my self that where I am you might be also." Are we longing for our home in heaven? Are we focused on things above? Do we listen for and obey God's voice as he assigns us tasks? Are we focused on our walk with God?

[11] Here we talk about Sarah's faith. Sarah also loved God. She trusted him and took him at his word. She first laughed at the thought that she would bear a son in her old age, well past the age of child bearing. But as Gen. 18:14 says "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" She named her one and only son, the son of the promise, Isaac, a name which means laughter. Does our faith let us take God at his word, even when it seems impossible?

[12] Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. It had been 25 years since God promised to make of Abraham a great nation with more offspring than stars in the sky and sand on the sea shore. Great faith requires patience. Do we patiently and faithfully wait for God and His timing? Timing is everything and God's timing is perfect; do we have the faith to believe that?

[13] Sarah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all died before any part of the promise could be seen with human eyes. They all died believing God, trusting God, knowing that some day he would keep his promise. They were strangers and pilgrims on earth, knowing that this was not their final home. They trusted God to prepare for them an eternal home with him.

[14-16] When our focus is earthly, we are focused on the wrong things. Abraham did not focus on earthly things, if he did, he might have been tempted to return to Ur, the land of his fathers, the land of his earthly inheritance. But he did not return. He stayed in this foreign land which God had promised to him and his descendants. People of faith do not retreat when the going gets tough. They desired a heavenly country; they desired God. Therefore he was proud of them & called them his people. And in due time he welcomed them into his heavenly city.

We all need encouragement as we continue in the ways of Christ. Jesus is the Messiah. He is the promised seed of Abraham. In Gen.12:3, God promises to bless all the families of the world through Abraham. Jesus is the way this promise is carried out. In John 14:6 Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life, nobody comes to the Father but by me." Jesus is available to any and all that will accept Him. The book of Hebrews encourages all believers to not quit or turn from their faith. Do we faithfully follow Jesus no matter what the circumstances are?

Christians today are encouraged not to return to the ways of the world. Sometimes the Christian life can seem hard and disappointing. We don't get what we think we should or we don't get it fast enough. We think Christian life is too tough for us & we want to quit. Let us take courage from these heroes of faith. They did not quit when they could see no proof of their faith; when it did not seem to be producing any kind of fruit. We walk by faith and not by sight. They did it, so can we. All we have to do is stick to it. All we have to do is believe. All we have to do is trust God.

What is God calling us to do? Do we have the faith in Him to obey? Are we willing to leave our homes and our families to move to an unknown destination? Are we willing to stick to a project for as long as it takes; even if people continually ridicule us? Are we willing to wait for God's timing? Do we have the faith in Him to wait? Do we have the faith so that He would not be ashamed to be called our God? Faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen; what are we hoping for today? Are we ready to put our faith into action? Amen, let's pray.